

Chronicles of Bruiser

Tales of a Street Sweeper

4/3/2007

Bruiser

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FOREWORD

When I burned out of college in spring of 2006, I found myself needing cash in the worst kind of way. I was flipping through the newspaper when I found an ad that read:


"Sweeper Vac Driver needed. 3rd shift only"

and gave subsequent contact info. I'm really great doing over night work and decided that I'd give it a shot. I arrive at the office, fill out an application, and before I walked out of the door I was given the job and told to report for training the following evening.


So, I reported to the office the following evening... and had the weirdest/craziest/funniest 8 months of my life. I was hoping to share a story or two with you guys. If you like 'em, I've got TONS.

Training Day:


Trying to make a good first impression, I showed up at 7:30; 15 minutes ahead of schedule. I found a note taped to the door that told me to have a seat in the break room and that my trainer would be with me shortly. Well, 7:30 eventually turned into 8:45 when I had decided to say "fuck it" and walk out. As I was heading for the door, a very unkempt man wearing jeans and a dirty T-Shirt stumbled in.


 Hey..uh.. you Bruiser?


 Yeah, I've been here since-

 Cool... alright, well uh, lemme go clock in and we'll get going. Here, take this stuff around back to our truck and I'll meet you out there.


I walked out, found our truck, and did some more waiting. Eventually, the guy comes back out with a bag full of stuff and sets it behind the seat. The guy finally introduces himself as Mark. He explained the finer points of the job.


 We go around to places like malls and grocery stores, use the sweeper truck to suck up the trash, use leaf blowers to blow trash away from the sidewalk, and empty all of the trashcans.

 Wow, that wasn't in the job description.

 Haha, it never is. Don't worry, FNG's get the hang of the job easily

 FNG?


 That's you, buddy.


Mark and I got to know each other en route to the first place we had to clean. He's one of the coolest guy's I've ever met and continues to be a friend to this day. He's got a really dry sense of humor, he's kind of a , and had been doing the job way too long.


I got the hang of it midway through the night. It wasn't hard at all, just mind-numbingly dull manual labor. Happy to have someone to talk to, Mark kept me entertained the entire night with stuff he had seen "out there". He also let me in on the fact that the "Sweeper Vac Guys" are pretty tight knit just for how shitty a job it was, and that leaving the "FNG" in the break room is kind of a hazing.

After a quick coffee break, we pulled up to one of our last stops for the night. It was a Walgreen's dead in the center of the Nashville ghetto. Mark dropped me off in front of the

building.

 Alright, buddy, I'm going to run across the street to our last stop of the night. Go ahead and change the trashcans and check the back of the store for anything out of the ordinary. I'll pick you up when you're done and we'll call it a night


 You're leaving me?


 Don't worry, call on the radio if you need anything!


and just like that, my pasty white ass was in the middle of the ghetto at 3am on a friday night. But, luckily for me, I grew up in D.C. and had learned some street sense.


I change the cans really quickly and went around back to "look for anything out of the ordinary".

Usually, I'm really good about watching my back. Notice I said "usually". I was noting that the lights had been shot out when I heard something behind me. I whirled around to see a crack head standing a few feet from me.


 Hey man! Hey! Uh, do you have a light, man?

 Sorry, I don't smoke

 Hey! Uh, do you got a dollar, man?

 Listen man, I'm covered to my head in stink at 3am on a Friday night. Does it look like I have a dollar?

The guy then pulls a knife from his jacket pocket. This is not going to happen. I'm covered head to toe in grime, I'm exhausted, and now a crack head is trying to mug me on my first night at work. This is not going to happen. So I did the only thing I could do.

 Come on, man! Give me that wallet!

I hold up my hands, nod, and make like I'm reaching behind me for my wallet. Well, some asshat had missed the dumpster with a pallet earlier in the day and had left planks of wood scattered about behind me.

I grab a plank of wood, whip around, and crack it as hard as I can on the side of his face. He drops like a ton of bricks and I reached for the radio.

🤔 Hey! Some crack head just tried to mug be back here. I think I knocked him out. Do we need to call Metro PD or something?

long pause

🤔 Hello?!

🤔 Is he dead?

🤔 WHAT!?

🤔 Is. He. Dead.

I reached down and felt a strong pulse on the guy (but man was his face a wreck).

🤔 No, he's alive.

🤔 Fuck it, I'm coming to pick you up, see you in a sec.

A moment later, Mark comes roaring behind the store, stops, and looks at my handy-work.

🤔 Good form!

🤔 Can we go now?

🤔 I mean, I've had to drop guys before, but this takes the cake!

🤔 Can we please go now?

Mark then takes a picture with his cell phone

🤔 I can't wait to show the guys when we get back to the office!

Later on that morning, he introduced me to everyone in the group. After showing off the pictures and bragging about "How his FNG dropped someone the first night" one of the other guys, Jay, got me a cup of coffee.

It was then that I found out that almost getting robbed was apart of the job and I handled it like it was supposed to be handled. 😊

I also found out that "FNG" stood for "Fuckin' New Guy."

Edit: I'm now back in school

The Beastmaster :

It was my third night on the job and I was still training in Nashville. I had gotten the job down pretty well and my nights were filled with talking to Mark. You see, out there at night, you start to go a little 🤪. Mark and I had been talking about the strange shit he's seen out here and doing a damn fine job of creeping me the hell out. He had just finished wrapping up a story about being chased by... well, something when he was out here one night.

🤪 Oh come on, you can't tell me that you were ACTUALLY chased by an animal.

🤪 Buddy, I'm telling 'ya. There was something out there chasing me. Something big wanted me, breathing down my neck. I think it smelled fear.

🤪 You're telling me a bear chased you?

🤪 Buddy, I don't know. I'm just telling ya there's stuff out here that we don't know about.

🤪 You're crazy

🤪 Maybe, maybe not, buddy.

So we pull onto a lot deep in the quiet suburbs of Nashville. We hop out and do our thing; Mark's in the front of the lot and I'm behind it checking things out. I paused to light a smoke and thought about what Mark had said.

scratch scratch

What the fuck was that? I chalked it up to being the wind and went back to my smoke.

scratch BANG!

Something fell down inside the area where they keep the dumpsters. I reached for the flashlight in my pocket and swept the beam around the area. As luck would have it, I didn't see a damn thing.

🤪 Hello?

Keep in mind that I was only into day 3 of training. The robber, and subsequent truck fires are still a few months off. I was still pretty green.

scratch BOOM! BANG!

Ohshitohshitohshit. This can't be happening. My first thought is that it was Mark just fucking

with me.

🤔 Mark, I'm not a moron. I know it's you back there.

BOOM! BOOM!

😏 Fuck this.

I'm a 20 year old college student who did some growing up in the District of Fucking Columbia. My first night I put the hurt on a fool who was trying to mug me. I'm 6'3, 250 pounds, and meaner than shit. I can take down, beat up, or kill whatever the fuck is behind that wall.

After my little pep talk, I took long, powerful strides to the gate that led into the dumpster area. I threw open the gate and hit everything with the flashlight.

Not a damn thing there.

Something ain't right about this. Not right at all.

I made the mistake of going to investigate further. I walked entirely into the gated area when a gust of wind blew the gate shut behind me. I heard something.

scratch scratch

I clicked off the flashlight and listened. Yeah, there was something in here. My mind immediately conjured up thoughts of a giant bloodthirsty beast. It sounded like there was something in the dumpster. I made a move to flip it open when whatever was inside beat me to it.

The dumpster lid flew open and the biggest goddamn raccoon I've ever seen jumped at me. This thing was the size of a dog and was none too happy that I had disturbed his dinner. I screamed like a girl.


😱 AAAAA! HOLY FUCKING SHIT!

I ripped the gate open and ran full steam away from the dumpster. The damn thing was following me!

I ran all the way around the building when Mark came to my rescue. Like a Roman centurion, he took a swing at the beast with a shovel.

🔨 GET BACK, FRED! LEAVE THE BOY ALONE!

The raccoon stops dead in it's furry little tracks.

 Yeah, this is Fred. We found out he's a she after we named her. You walked right into her nest. Good job screaming at a raccoon, you've got some fast on you too, buddy. Didn't think you could move that quick.

Rightly embarrassed, I started packing the truck up.

The raccoon just stared at me like  the rest of the time I was there.

Fred and I would develop a relationship and I would use her later on in my stay with the company. But that's a story called "Bruiser trains an FNG"

Here by request, Messing with Ricers.

It's like "The Fast and the Furious"... but with even worse cars and zit-faced high school kids:

So, I pull into Dover Crossing (see: shitty Kroger shopping center) and cruise around to get a general idea of how much trash is on the parking lot. Well, right in the center of the lot there are around 30 high school aged kids showing off their cheap, poorly modded, late 90's import cars. I could have handled that alone, but the cars we're parked the exact opposite from the parking spaces. I guess spending mommy's money on a body kit from eBay (that you managed to crack 2 days after purchase) gives you the right to do that. There are a couple of problems here:

- 1) The children are hanging out right in the middle of the lot... over trash... that I need to pick up... now.
- 2) I have a deep hatred for idiot 17 year olds, shitty riced-out Honda civics, AND the anorexic trailer trash that passes for female companionship in that neck of the woods.

A trifecta of doom united.

this could get interesting.

So I park the truck at the end of the lot, blow out the curb line, and proceed to pick up every bit of trash AROUND the Mentally Challenged Drivers Club meeting. I made a few close passes, hoping that they would get some assemblage of a clue and move. I then shunned myself for applying an ounce of logic when dealing with retards.

So I cruise around for around 5 minutes and they still don't move. I shut down the rear engine and go over to the group of kids, I quickly find the leader and have a conversation with him... it went something like this:

🤡 Hey man, I was wondering if you guys could move a couple of spaces over so I can sweep here. You don't have to move your car or anything, I just need to get into this aisle for about 3 minutes."

Moron: 🤡 "Fuck you."

🤡 Hey man, we don't need any of that.. I just need to move in here for a few minutes. I'll be out of your hair in no time, really.

Moron: 🤡 "Why don't you get back into your truck, and get the fuck out of here."

-- Now... the group of kids had gathered around, and had actually started laughing at that last comment.

☹️So, it's like that?

Moron: 😊 "Yeah, it's like that."

☹️Alright man, just remember that I asked nicely first.

Moron: 😊 "FUCK OFF, GARBAGE MAN!"

-- You know, something I've never understood is why people have to mess with me. First of all, I'm as big as a tank and I know how to fight. Second of all, I'm a nice guy... until you piss me off. So the children taunt me as I go back to my truck.

Oh, damn.. I forgot to mention that I picked up a bag of Quick-Crete at Home Depot.. my previous stop that evening. You see, it was a full bag that had split open, so I had just put it in the back of my hopper (the hopper is where all of the trash goes). Oops. I wonder what would happen if I ran the blower engine (that's the engine that creates suction) at 100% throttle with all of that powdered Quick-Crete in the back... might as well find out, right?

I dropped the hammer on the throttle control. My blower engine was screaming at full throttle, exhaust shooting out of the pipes. I had never run it at full power because usually 30-50% is more than enough to pick up garbage.Plus, I didn't need anymore exploding sweeper trucks. The entire truck was shuddering. There was so much pressure in the hopper, the Quick-Crete couldn't find a way to escape.... so I made one.

I made one final run at the children. I was going about 25 miles an hour when I hit the controls to separate the hopper from the truck. What ensued was something for the ages.

Quick-Crete and dust came billowing out of the two gigantic intake tubes. It seriously looked like a scene from Maximum Overdrive. The sound was horrendous as I made 3 loops around the children and their cars. A Thick cloud of dust enveloped the parking lot as I did my laps like some kind of demon.

The kids literally sprinted to their cars which were now covered with a super fine layer of white powder. I had never seen a parking lot clear out in under 15 seconds.

I shut my engine down, reconnected the hopper to the intake tubes, and moved to the dust storm-free front of the Kroger. Unbeknownst to me, I had drawn a crowd of the late night stocking crew who had seen me talking to the teens on camera, and wanted to watch the action.

I hopped out of the truck and lit a cigarette. All of the stocking crew was amazed and said "that was fucking awesome!" and that I "showed those assholes". We chatted for a few minutes as the dust cloud settled. It was time to move on to my next stop.

Oh, there's one more thing. A rainstorm had moved through about 10 minutes before I showed up. Their cars were wet when I crop dusted.

Hope they had fun getting that shit off.

Dead Rising:

It was one of those creepy as fuck nights. The weather was in that in between low 60's stage with a breeze. Too chilly at night for short sleeves, to warm for a jacket, and the moon was out full bore. I pulled up to my second stop of the night, a Home Depot. The moon was casting jagged, spearing shadows across the parking lot. I was using the blowers to clear out an island when I ducked around a row of sheds to relieve myself. Down at the end of a row was a red pickup truck. This by itself was not odd; usually an employee that left with a friend, maybe a couple 🧐🧐, you know what I mean?

Well, I eventually made it back to the truck and started sweeping the lot. I thought about that truck and took a swing by it hoping i could scare the shit out of some high school couple doing the tube snake boogie. I made one pass around the back and something just didn't jibe.

You see, working by yourself in the dead of night teaches you some things. You sort of develop a sixth sense of things and you know when something just isn't right. This was one of those cases.

I made another pass. Out of state tags. Again, nothing important, but damn. It was on the second pass that i noticed a silhouette in the driver's seat. That enough creeped me out a bit, but i was just seeing things. I decided to finish up the lot and made one last pass. This time I parked behind it, killed the lights, and just watched. The figure didn't move, so i hopped out. I figured it was someone who pulled off to grab a few winks. I was doing my duties as a good Samaritan.

I walked over and was going to politely tap on the window. I raised my wrist to give a sharp rap and stopped dead cold. There was someone in there alright. A guy had his head leaning against the window. But, on the window was... oh, god... is that blood? When i took a closer look, i could see hunks of what looked like meat.

Oh, Christ. Some guy either got whacked or blew his brains out.


ON MY PARKING LOT!


I instantly picked up the bat phone to call Bryce. Side note: Bryce was my go to man for all things fucked up. Being that I didn't have my carry permit yet, my only weapon at the time was a tire iron, i always opted to bring in the guy with a gun. Anyway, back to the story.





This is the Bryceman


🧐 Hey, it's bruiser. Look, I'm over here at the Home Depot. I think some guy blew his brains out in his truck or something.


 No shit?

 No shit.

 Did you check if he's breathing?


 Bryce. It's 2:30 in the morning, I look suspicious by nature, and it looks like there's a dead guy. No. I didn't touch him or the truck.

 Good thinking

 I managed to learn a few things in college.

 It's a state school


 NOT THE TIME, BRYCE!

 I'm actually two streets down, I'll be there in a sec.


I hung up, lit a shaky cigarette, and walked back to my truck. Christ. Did i just discover a corpse?

Bryce showed up and parked beside me. He had a rookie with him who looked like he was 12 and wanted to shoot something. The rook started to eyeball me. Bryce told him I was okay, and all three of us walked up to the door. I discovered the thing, so i might as well get a look, right?


Bryce taps the door with his maglite.

 Sir? Sir? You okay?





The rookie draws his gun and I back up. Bryce looks at the rook, nods, and reaches for the door. He pulls the handle. The corpse picks its head up off the glass and screams.

 AHHHHH!

 AHHHHHHHHHH

 AHHHHHHHHH

 AHHHHHHHH

    GAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

The corpse then proceeds to vomit all over Bryce and the rookie. Bryce jumps back in terror. I'm just 🤢 and the rookie looks like he's about to blow the zombie away.

🤦 WHAT THE SHIT!

Turns out my corpse was a guy so drunk he puked all over the inside of the truck window, and then passed out in it. The blood was a red drink mixed with vomit. Backup arrived with an EMT.

After checking to make sure i didn't shit myself, I watched the guy fail his field sobriety test to the point of passing out on the hood of Bryce's squad car. They eventually rolled his ass into the ambulance and bailed out.

Bryce was pissed.

That was his only clean uniform. 🤝 🏆 Bravo!


Doug and the killer KY:


As I mentioned before, the Sweeper Vac Unit was a pretty tight knit group. We were an assembly of the damned; 15 men working one of the shittiest jobs possible. That being said, we pranked the hell out of each other on a nightly basis. This is the story of Doug and the killer KY.

Part of our job entailed walking around the property and checking for things. Not exactly a security guard, but just making sure buildings hadn't been broken into. Well, sometimes we would find things out by the dumpsters. Especially at the Walgreen's. You see, they would throw any kind of over stock and just lay it up against the back wall of the building. Being that we were responsible for cleaning it up, we would sometimes discover an interesting find.

This time I had found an entire case of KY Warming lubricant. I cracked open the case and found around 50 sealed, unused bottles. I instantly called Jay, our resident prank master, and called in my find.

 Go ahead, Bruiser

 Hey, brother, you're not going to believe what I just found

 If it's not a blind Dutch prostitute, I'm not interested.

 It's close. It's a case of KY.


 Dick lube?

 No.. WARMING dick lube.

 Bring it in when you head back to the barn tonight.

 10-4.

I knew that anything he was going to use the "Dick lube" for was going to be epic. I eagerly finished up the night, hid my crate of dick lube, and went home for the day. I got a call from Jay earlier that day telling me to show up early to work. Our target was Doug.

Doug was the epitome of . He was paranoid to the point of idiocy, always looking behind him, always sitting with his back to the wall, and always annoying the piss out of us with stories about people trying to "get him" on his route. He also thought that Al Qaeda was setting up a cell in middle Tennessee.

This would be like shooting ducks in a barrel.

So Jay and I took the case of KY around to the back, opened the cab of Doug's truck, and proceeded to bathe every surface of the truck in KY. Pleased with our handy work (🤖), we ducked back into the office when the rest of the crew showed up.

Well,Doug was going on and on about how Metro PD was running surveillance on his route. He said that he had proof and that it was in his truck. So, he runs out and those of us that were in on it start to chuckle. A minute goes by, two minutes, 5 minutes. Jay just looks at me and says

🤖 Three... two... o-

WHAM! Goes the office door

🤖 aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!

Doug comes running into the office

🤖 AAAAAAAAAAAA OH GOD! I'VE BEEN POISONED!

😬 Oh my god! What do you mean?!

🤖 I've been sabotaged! There's acid all over the inside of my truck! IT BURNS!

🤖 Oh no! Who do you think it was?!

🤖 I FUCKING TOLD YOU AL QAEDA SET UP A CELL! I TOLD EVERYONE! OH GOD THE BURNING

It should be noted that Doug was covered head to toe in KY, running around the office and shouting at everything.

😬 Maybe you should jump into the shower! Wash off the acid!

🤖 GOOD IDEA, BRUISER! GAH THE BURNING!

I couldn't help myself...

😬 The BURNINATION?!

🤖 YES!

Finally his crazy ass runs into the locker room. There's a quick two beat and then the entire room erupts into laughter. Before leaving, we put a bottle of stuff on the table in the locker room with a note that said:

"You foiled our secret plot -
With love,
Osama XOXO "

Turns out he spent 3 hours cleaning the KY out of his truck that night.

Illegal Street (sweeper) Racing:

Halfway through my stay at the company, I was working 7 days a week. 5 days on my normal route in Murfreesboro and the weekend sweeping in Clarksville. Now, for those of you not familiar with the geography, Murfreesboro is in the exact center of TN where as Clarksville is on the TN/KY border. I had finished my Friday night in Clarksville and was cruising down I-24 when i get a call from Mike.

👨🍻 Hey, where are you at?

👨🍻 I'm about 20 outside Nashville, you?

👨🍻 I'm just wrapping up here in Green Hills (Nashville 'burb).

👨🍻 Cool, you want to meet up?

👨🍻 Actually, I'm so fast I'll probably beat you back to Murfreesboro AND have time to fuck your girlfriend.

👨🍻 That fast, eh?

👨🍻 That fast.

👨🍻 Well, perk up your ears, old man. I want you to hear this. Never. Not in this lifetime or the next will you ever beat me in a race. Not tonight. Not ever.

👨🍻 Oh, we'll see. Give me a call before you reach the Trinity Ln. Exit. I'll be waiting.

👨🍻 See you there.

Now, Mike and I are pretty close. We tended to hang out after work during the week drinking beer and playing Need for Speed: Most Wanted until noon. By the way, getting drunk at 9am is awesome. But I digress.

I radio in that I'm about to pass the exit, and the race is on.

I pass his truck at 80 and he quickly catches up. My side mirrors are filled with his headlights as we fly down I-24 at 4 in the morning. He passes me and I drop the hammer. Tucking in behind his truck, I start drafting him at 97 miles an hour.

The entire truck is shaking. For a brief instant I think that this rat-trap piece of shit is going to fall apart around me. A demon is trying to escape from the hood. I can't imagine what two sweeper vac trucks traveling at speeds close to 100 miles an hour, inches apart from each other looks like*.

I see the sign for our exit; 3/4 of a mile. I sling shot around Mike and take a glance at the speedometer. There I can't see the needle and the ass end is poking toward "5". I finally pass him and rocket up the on ramp. Our office isn't too far off the interstate and I do a good job of blocking until I get to the shop. Needless to say, I won.

Well, We pull in and hop out.

😏Hah! What the fuck did I say!

🙄Um.. Bruiser?

😏You see that shit?! I had the needle buried into the dash. I'm awesome!

🙄Bruiser?

😏I think you need to buy the beer today, because that shit was outta sight!

🙄BRUISER!

😏WHAT?!

🙄Look at the ass end of your truck.

I walk around and take a look. The rear axle at the wheel hubs was smoking. I did the mental connect the dots.

😏Was I on...

🙄🍺Fire? Yeah. You were. I tried to tell you, but you didn't hear me.

😏Did it look cool?

🙄🍺...

😏I bet it did.

🙄🍺Are you kidding me? It was like the sweeper truck from hell! It was fucking fantastic!

😏I knew it.

And that was the end of the story. Or at least I thought it was until Bryce called me.

🔊 Hey Bruise

😬Bryceman!

🗣️ Yeah.. uh, hi. Listen, I just got a call from a trooper friend of mine talking about a pair of sweeper trucks doing about a buck-oh-five down 24. You know anything about that?

😬NOOOOOOOooooooo, are you serious? These things? They hardly do 80

🗣️ Riiiiiiight, well just look for the smoking truck, apparently the guy was burning his axles and looked all seven flavors of hell coming down the highway.

* check that, it looked awesome.

Sweeper Vac Olympics:

🤪you know, some of the shit we do could be considered a sport.

And that's how the whole damn thing got started. You see, that night it was raining so hard that they were talking about flooding. When it rains that hard, the only thing you can do is go out, do the best you can, and usually head back really early. Well, a group of five of us got together and decided to have a competition to show off elite sweeper skills.

There were four events:

High speed Bottle Toss

Slalom

30 yard shopping cart roundup

High speed Trash Grab.

At the end of our night, Myself, Mike, Jay, Doug, and Mac met up at one of the largest properties. We parked the trucks and I explained the rules over the radio.

🤪Alright. 5 events, one point each. Person with the most points at the end of the night wins. First up is High Speed Bottle Toss.

This event required the use of a 40oz. You see, the bottles were usually too big to suck up and would usually just roll with the truck underneath the suction head. The easiest way to suck them up was to catch it under the head, get it to roll with you, speed up to about 30mph, and then stomp the brakes while breaking hard left. The bottle would then sling shot out of the head and go careening down the pavement and eventually break. The idea of this game was to see how far you could sling the bottle. Mac was up first.

He captured his bottle, wound the truck up, and slung the bottle about halfway down the parking lot before it broke.

Jay broke his bottle before he even go started

🤪SONOFABITCH!!

🤪🤪🤪BWAAAAHAHAHA!

Doug sent his flying the wrong damn way and it exploded on a concrete island.

Mike sent his bottle tearing across the parking lot. It slowed and rolled gently to a stop against the far curb line.

🍺 Oh my. That's quite the shot. I... I'm just so new at.. what is this called, the "bottle toss? I never expected to win. *wipes a fake tear away* I'm so happy!

🤪 Alright, old man. Watch this.

I got a running start, scooped up the bottle underneath me, and dropped the fucking hammer. I got the truck up to 50, mashed the brakes, and cranked the wheel hard over to the left. Maaan, the fucking bottle shot out of there like a cannon. About halfway through the roll, the bottle bounced just right and went airborne. Cartwheeling through the air, it finally exploded against a store front.

🤪 OH SHIT! Did that? Mike, tell me that just happened!

🍺 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

🤪 I mean. Oh wow. I think i just sunk your fuckin' Battleship.

With a win under my belt, we moved on to the Slalom.

This even was really easy. Cut around the concrete islands the complete length of the lot, and double back to the start point. Mac clocked in last, Doug fourth, Bruiser third, Mike second, and Jay first. We moved on to my favorite event: the 30 yard Shopping Cart Roundup.

This event involves stand 30 yards back from a shopping cart corral. You bump the cart with your truck, and the person closest to the corral wins.

Long story short, the event came down to Mike and I.

🍺 You ready, kid?

🤪 Born ready.

Mike gets a good start and whacks the cart down the parking lot.

🍺 Stay on target. Stay on target. Little more. Stayyyyyy on tarrrrrgeetttt. YESSAH!

The cart hit the side of the cart corral and toppled over.

🍺 Oooooo... hurts, don't it?

🤪 Spare me, old man. I've got this.

🍺 Boy, I raised you. I've seen what you got, and it ain't pretty.

That's right, kiddos! Mike is actually my father. He started working the job about 9 months before I did. I'll sum up how we both ended here in another post.

🤔Whatever, dad. Check this shit out.

Now, the trick to aiming the shopping cart is to tap the brakes before you hit the shopping cart. Well, I wound her up, and tapped the cart with the grace of a Russian gymnast. The cart slowed to a crawl and Gently. Slid. Into. The. Corral. Perfect score. It looked like sex.

🤔They should REALLY pay me extra. I give them artwork every single day, and all I just get more property to do.

Well, the last event was supposed to be the high speed garbage pickup. The idea was to use your grabbers (scientific name for large tongs on the end of a steel pole used to grab anything that wouldn't go into the truck) and try to grab as much stuff as possible. Well, the rain started up again, and we got washed out.

At the end of the night, I had racked up the most points. Jay was second, and the rest were tied for third.

The prize?

A cup of coffee from the best place in town.

It was a damn good cup of coffee.

DUI-a-go-go:

This was a pretty unremarkable evening. I was at a normal shopping center, doing my normal job. All in all, it was boring as hell. Well, it's about 3am on a Wednesday, and There is a quiet, trendy little bar in the center I'm sweeping. This is actually in the good part of town, as marked by the Mercedes SLK Kompressor. Electric blue. Hardtop convertible. 🤪

Well, I'm sweeping around it and I notice a lady passed out in the front seat. This is pretty unremarkable. Lady has too many cosmos with her girl friends, passes out in her car to sleep it off for a while. Well, I park a ways away and start to fill out my log sheet, being that this is the last stop of a short night.

I see the lights on the SLK snap on and i set my clipboard down and pop open a can of soda. This is going to be fun to watch.

There are giant, artsy concrete pillars on the lot that make a valiant effort to try and make it look like something other than a parking lot. The lady backs up and turns around.

WHAM!

Goes the front end of the car

WHAM!

Goes the ass end of the car as she tries to back up.

WHAM!

Goes the front of the car again.

This series repeated itself at least four or five times. The lady finally hit the pillar hard enough to deploy the airbag.

She stumbles out of the car.


She looks at it.


She throws her shoe at the windshield.


She vomits.


She gets back in and passes out.


I quickly dialed Bryce.

 It better be good, because I'm asshole deep in a Clancy novel.


 Don't you have some sort of police work to be doing?

 Why, is there some police work that needs to be done?


 Well, if you count a woman totaling her SLK Kompressor in a parking lot over and over and over again. Well, yeah.

 She alive?


 Drunk. Passed out actually.


 Damn it, Bruiser! Why do you always have to make more paperwork for me?

 Who loves 'ya, baby?!

 I'm on my way.


He shows up about 10 minutes later and knocks on the window of the SLK.

 Ma'am? You alright in there?


 Yesst occifer. I'm justh shleepin'. I had a hawd day todayyyyyy at works. I'm to tired to drive ho- *stops herself and swallows a gag* -home.


 What happened to you car?

 Shlome asshole hit me.

 Wow, he did a real number on it, didn't he?

 Ye- BLLLLLLWWWWAAAAARRRRRGGGGGGGG *vomits all over the dash*

 Ma'am, have you been drinking?

 I may have had a spritzer or two

Bryce picks up a piece of paper that fell out of the car. It's the bar tab.

 Let's see. You had 9 vodka tonics and 3 cosmopolitans. It says here the bill was divided, so

this is all you.

😂GOD...DAMN! That's fucking epic!

🤔 I know, right?

🤔I-I-I-I... BLLLLLWWAAAARRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGGGGGG!

🤔 *looks at Bruiser* Dude.

😂You know I keep you entertained.

🤔 Do you just go out and find things to fuck up my night?

🤔 Maybe.

🤔 I hate you.

😂Love 'ya baby!

I wished him well and drove home. When i looked in my mirror as I drove away, the lady was falling over trying to walk a straight line.

The night I set my truck on fire:

The equipment that we were provided with really wasn't the best. The trucks were old and frequently broke down, the engine for the blower motor (the motor that provided suction 🤖) didn't work correctly, and everything was worn out and smelled like garbage.

One fall evening, something went horribly wrong. Horribly, horribly wrong.

I was about halfway through my run at the local mall. Because it was fall, i had managed to suck up a metric assload of leaves into the truck's hopper. I was rolling along, jamming out to my iPod when I sensed a change in the blower motor. It sounded like some sort of shrieking, so I hopped out for a closer listen.

Yeah, it was shrieking all right, but I didn't see anything wrong. I started to walk back to the cab when all hell broke loose. The shrieking had turned into a high pitched screaming and smoke poured out of the top. Not good. I was trying to smack the kill switch when the engine caught fire.

I got back out of the cab and just 😬. Finally, my mind got into gear and I made a reach for the fire extinguisher which was strapped just below the rear motor... right next to a 5 gallon jerry can of fuel for the leaf blowers. And then I said something that I ended up saying pretty much every night with that job.

"Oh. Hell no."

The entire ass of the truck was engulfed in flames. I calmly reached for my phone and speed dialed the number of a cop I had befriended a few weeks prior.

📞 This is Bryce.

📞 Hey, it's Bruiser. You got a sec?

📞 Yeah dude, what's up?

📞 Well, I'm at the mall and the entire ass of my truck is on fire.

📞 You hurt or anything?

📞 Nope.

📞 Awesome, I'll be there in a sec!

I sat down on a concrete island away from the truck, lit a cigarette (I didn't smoke before I took

this job) and just waited for Bryce.

I didn't have to wait long, because halfway through my cigarette, Bryce and two other squad cars roll up. We all end up standing there for about a minute, just watching the entire ass of this truck go up in flames. Bryce finally calls it in and we all just stand there watching.

Well, remember how I mentioned sucking up the leaves? Yeah, somehow an ember got into the hopper and set everything off. Heat and pressure built up in the metal hopper and started bowing out the sides, making a sickening metal popping noise. Finally figuring things out, I just looked at Bryce and said, "Watch this."

As if on cue, WHUMP! The rear door of the hopper blows open and skitters across the parking lot. Thick tongues of flame lick out of the back. Leaves and flaming garbage are all around the truck in the most disgusting thing I've ever smelled.

Bryce looks over at me and just says

 R I G H T E O U S !

Well, the fire department shows up, douses the flames, and somewhere in all of that I radioed Sweeper HQ. A tow truck came with a spare truck for me, and hauled the hulk of my old truck away.

I kind of went through the motions for the rest of the night and fully expected to be fired, or at least reprimanded.

Nope. My boss asked if I was all right and told me:

 These things happen all the time!

Bryce made me promise to call him every time something like that happened.

Edit: I asked for pictures of the truck for my blog, but the Boss said no. Being that I had a cheapie cell phone, I didn't have a camera there either. I'm sure the pics are attached to some insurance person's cubicle somewhere.

Bruiser trains an FNG: Episode one- First strike.

The things that I did to this guy are borderline criminal. This takes place near the end of my tenure at the company. I feel that in order to fully appreciate these batteries of stories, you need to get a glimpse of my mental state at the time.

Endless stretches of 14 days on, 2 off had eventually turned me into a psychopath. I had turned into a night stalker whose sarcasm, wit, and anger was as sharp as a fine sword. My girlfriend of 2 years broke up with me 3 days before this first story.

This was the perfect time to train an FNG.

👤 We've got a new hire named Jim. He's going to start tomorrow, and I want you to train him up.

👤 Me?

👤 We're about to do some shifting of routes, and I want him to get a feel for it.

👤 Tomorrow, you say?

👤 Tomorrow night.

👤 I'll be there, boss.

So the time to meet Jim at the office eventually comes and passes. I come ditty-bopping into the office and hour and 45 after he showed up to meet me.

😊 Are you Bruiser?

😊 Nope

😊 ... 'scuse me?

I grabbed the shit out of my locker, scooped up my board and radio, and made for the door.

😊 Let's rock and roll!

😊 ... uh.

🙌🙌🙌 I SAID AND ROCK AND ROLL. WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

I lead the guy out to the truck, throw my shit in the back, and start her up. Meanwhile, Jim gets in and tries to find the seatbelt. I'm busy setting up my iPod.

😬They don't work.

???
😬...What?

😬They don't work. *points to seatbelts*. I'm tellin'ya, man. One crash and AHHHHHHHHH! OH GOD THE PAIN! ... you're ass is going right through that windshield.

???
😬Oh god!

😬Not even he can save 'ya now. LET'S GO!

and proceeded to crank up some of the hardest metal I could find. I did a burnout in the parking lot and laughed like a serial killer that wasn't afraid to die. While all of this is going on, I'm looking at Jim with a 😬 look.

Now would be a good of place as any to tell you about my age. While working there I was 20, I've mentioned that. But what I haven't mentioned was that I was the youngest person there by 12 years. Jim looked to be in his late twenties or early thirties.

Well, I get to know a little bit more about Jim. He has to scream to be heard over the metal.

😬So, this will be a weekend gig for you? *turns down radio*

😬YEAH I WORK AT THE BOAT FACTORY.. *ahem*... I work at the boat factory.

🤔You don't have to yell at me, Jim

😬I'm sor-

🤔I'm sensitive.

😬I didn-

🤔You have the prettiest blue eyes, Jim

😬-uh

🤔Anyone ever told you that?

😬Could you please watch the road?

🙄 Like two sapphire pools. I could just get lost in them

🙄 YOU'RE CROSSING INTO THE OTHER LANE!

🙄 oopsie!

And it continued on like this for the rest of the night. Much to his credit, Jim didn't freak out on me. Because I was a man up, we finished about two hours early. I pulled into the iHop and bought Jim breakfast.

🙄 I like ya man.

🙄 Oh, i'm sorry bruiser, I'm not... you know, I'm married

🙄 You calling me gay, Jim?

🙄 No! Oh god, no! I just thought... you know, about the eye thing.

🙄 I was saying I like ya. You remained calm with everything I threw at you.

🙄 Thanks. I really need the job. We just had a baby and we need the extra cash.

🙄 Congrats, man! I'm not really that psychopathic. It's kind of like hazing, ya know?

🙄 Oh, I gotcha! Hey, I was wondering.. Did I come in at the wrong time, or were you just late? Or something?

🙄 Jim, It happens to all FNG's their first night.

🙄 What's an FNG?

I just grinned as I remembered my first night.

🙄 That's you, buddy.

I'm not what you expected? :

It was late on a Thursday night, I was running behind, and the state was asshole deep in an early spring freeze. The day's snowfall had turned to slush, which in turn flipped to a hard ice on this particular lot. I was out with the leaf blowers, freezing my ass off, and cursing every deity known and yet unknown. I was in my jeans, hard boots, watch cap (with University logo, GO BLUE!) and beat up frat sweatshirt. Earlier in the night I fell and cracked the area above my eye open and dried blood had oozed under the bandage from my homemade first aid kit. Life was not on my side and I looked like hell. Seeing that I was getting nowhere with the leaf blowers, I started making my way back to the truck.

I was walking in front of the 24 hour grocery store when she walked out.

"She" was about 5'4, 105 pounds, chestnut hair tucked under a winter hat, face wrapped up in a scarf and wearing jeans that could kill a man. You know what I'm talking about, ladies. Those jeans that show off your ass really well and YOU KNOW IT.

She was walking out as I was walking by and I shot a friendly smile. She smiled back, hit a slick spot of ice, and went down like a sack of potatoes.

😬GODDAMNIT!

😬*running over and doing a really cool slide on one knee across the ice thing* Are you okay, ma'am?

😬Yeah, I banged my elbow. That really hurts!

😬Here, let me help you up.

She undid the scarf and I saw her face.

Now, most of the women you see out on the trail, that is, if they're women at all, are Sea-Donkyes. I don't mean to be mean, but c'mon. Tennessee is the Meth capitol of the world! And it shows. That's all I'm saying.

I saw her face and I was taken aback.

She was the prettiest girl I've seen in a while. Beautiful almond colored eyes, flawless face, and she even smelled like peppermint.

Fan-fucking-tastic. I meet the hottest girl I've seen in a long damn time and I'm dirty, bloodied, and I probably smell like garbage. 🖐️🖐️

I help her up and she falls back down again.

😬I'm from Florida, damnit! I don't know how to walk on ice!

😬Relax, just let me help you up. I'm from D.C., I know how this stuff works.

She got steady on her feet again and she started brushing herself off.

😬Thanks so much!

😬No problem. Have a nice night.

She started walking off and I could see she was still uneasy. When she started going down again, I dropped my shit and caught her.

😬You're a lifesaver.

😬*mocks tipping his hat* All in a days work, ma'am.

😬Hey! You go to Middle Tenn?

😬Hah, sort of.

😬Me too!

😬Really? What are you studying?

😬I'm a transfer student from UCF; Business Admin. I came up here to start all over. That's why I'm working 3rd shift at a fucking Publix. What about you?

😬Well, I usually change my major once every two weeks. I think this week it's either History or Equine Science. I'm kind of taking a little break which is why I'm working 3rd shift driving a fucking street sweeper.

😬I love horses.

😬And I was kidding.

😬And you don't read sarcasm very well.

Oooooooo, and she was sharp to boot!

😬Well, sweeper-guy, want to walk me to my car?

🤔No problem.

So I walked her to the back of the parking lot where her car was, helping her out along the way. We finally get to her beat up VW Rabbit. She sticks out her hand.

😊Well thanks...

🤔Bruiser.

😊Jen.

🤔Well, Jen from Florida, drive safe, okay?

😊Will do, Bruiser from D.C.

I started walking back when she called out.

😊When do you work here?

🤔Everyday that ends in "Y". You?

😊See you soon!

I waved and got back into my truck. I really wasn't hoping for anything other than what just happened. She's hot and I'm an oaf. Nothing more will come of this.

I thought that until the next night...

Brusier trains an FNG- Episode 2: The finer points.

Training with Jim was going well. We were on our 3rd and last night and he got a hang of the job pretty well. He wasn't as crazy as the rest of us, but I knew that would come with time. We had pulled up to a place called "Towne Centere" which is a property with way too many fucking E's.. It's also one of the largest on the route.

😁Alright, bud. Last one of the night

😁woo-woo!

😁I heard that. Let's rail this one out and head back to the-

I was swinging behind the the property when I saw a Ford LTD being shady as hell. I swung around behind it, killed the lights, and waited.

😁What are we doing?

😁Shh, I'm teaching you a lesson

😁What lesson?

👉😁What's wrong with that car?

The car started to move up and down ever so slightly and the windows were fogged as hell. You could clearly hear shitty rap music blaring inside of the car.

😁OH!

😁That's what she said.

😁Are we just going to sit here and watch? This is kind of creepy, Bruiser.

👉😁SHH! I'm teaching you a lesson.

I hit the controls to raise the hopper. Fully erect 🤖the truck looks like some sort of bastard Transformer from the seventh layer of hell. Because the truck is noisy as hell, I eased the truck right behind the LTD (which by this point was in full motion).

A few weeks prior, I had found a miniature kid's bull horn behind a Walgreen's. Loaded up with fresh batteries, now seemed like a good time to use it. I opened the door and left instructions with Jim.

Doing my best 🤪, I crept around to the drivers side of the LTD. I made a hand motion to Jim. He started the blower motor and ran the throttle all the way up while turning on the high beams and all of the curb lights. Dust was blowing out of the intakes. With the hopper up, with the noise and the dust and the lights... well, it looked like a fuckin' death robot. That's the only words I can think of.

I brought the bull horn to my lips. In my best high-pitched metal voice, I said:

👊👊👊 From the neither world of Satan I come trouncing through the night
WAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

The girl inside started screaming and I could see them trying to put clothes on

👊👊👊 I HAVE COME TO DELIVER A MESSAGE FROM OUR DARK PRINCE
OOOOOOOOOOOOOoooooooooooo

The door flew open and the guy comes out of the LTD.

👊👊👊 OHHHHH GET THE FUCK OFF OF MY PARKING LOT AND GO FROM WHENCE YOU CAME,
GET THE FUCK OFF OF MY LOT, HIDE YOUR FACE IN SHAME! HEAVEN HELP IF YOU LEAVE A
RUBBER, THAT SHIT JUST WON'T DO, YOUR GIRLFRIEND IS SO FAT IT, I THINK. SHE. JUST. SAID.
MOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

Well, the guy is about 16 and scrawny. His girl is a complete 🍆👊 and I make the motion for Jim to cut the engines.

😏 Hey, man!

😏 Who the fuck are you?!

😏 I'm the guy that was going to have to clean up that used rubber you were about to throw down on my lot.

😏 I...I...I...

😏 I...I...I... I think you and your girl better hit the fucking bricks before I call the cops.

😏 You can't do shit!

I pulled out my phone and got ready to hit the speed dial.

😏 Please. Please talk some more shit so I can see my friend bust you and your girl. *leans in very close* how old is she, man?

😬Six...Six...Sixteen

😬And how old are you?

😬*hangs head* Eighteen.

😬How'd you like to do time for statutory rape? Do you know what they do to people who go down for rape?


😬No.

😬They trade your ass to Tyrone for a pack of Lucky Strike's. Tyrone likes to dance. Do you like to dance?

😬*starting to sob* No...

😬I didn't think so. Now, what was that about me not doing shit?

😬Please don't, I love her and her mom and-

😬Stop. Get back in your car. Leave. *looks at  * You! Go home, talk to your parents! NOW!

The girl hops back into the LTD.

😬Thankyouthankyouthankyou!

😬I better not see you ever again.

😬No sir!

The kid jumps back into the car. As I get back into the truck, I lean out with the bull horn.

😬GOD BLESS!!! HAVE A GOOD NIGHT!

We pull away and Jim is just shocked



What was that?

I lit a cigarette.

😬That, Jimbo, Is how the job is done.

I'm not what you expected pt 2:

I pretty much forgot about her the rest of the night. I finished up, turned in, and crashed hard early the next morning. After a too short sleep, I woke up and was ready for the grind again. As promised, I showed up the very next night at around 3ish and started doing my job.

Luckily, the sun broke early in the day. Despite it being cold as balls, the slush melted away and made my job a little easier. Dressed somewhat in the same way (this time it was a Capitals Hockey Jersey), I went about my cleaning. I was loading a bag of garbage into the rack that sits behind the truck when Jen came out of the front door.

😬The Capitals suck.

😬You're from Florida. I thought you didn't know about ice.

😬I know enough to know that the Capitals suck.

😬And who do you root for?

😬Red Wings.

😬How does it feel?

😬How does what feel?

😬You know... riding on that bandwagon all day long.

😬Pretty good, considering.

😬Considering what?

😬Considering that we have a Stanley Cup. OH MY GOD, WHAT?!

😬Yeah, yeah. Anyway, how's your elbow?

😬Sore as hell. I wanted to come out here and personally thank you with this cup of coffee.

😬Thanks! You didn't have to do that. I was just doing my job.

😬My hero. Walk me out to my car again?

And so I did. We walked out, shot the shit for a few minutes, and reached that silence where it's time for someone to go, but you none of you want to leave.

😄Hey, what are you doing this weekend?

😄I've got tomorrow night off.

😄Really? So do I!

😄Well, barring boyfriends, husbands, and common law spouses, How about we go for some dinner? Nothing too serious, just casual.

😄You don't play around, do you?

😄Life's too short.

She pulled out a piece of paper and a pen from her jacket.

😄Here's my number. Hopefully you won't be like every other guy and flake out on me.

😄You don't play around, do you?

😄*mockingly* Aw schucks, Bruiser. I think I'm sweet on 'ya.

😄Hah! Well... I'll give you a call tomorrow afternoon. We'll see who flakes out.

😄Calling my bluff?

😄I'm not a gambling man. But thanks for the coffee.

She looked up at me with a smile that could melt even the coldest of hearts. With soft eyes and a softer voice.

😄Talk to you soon.

I rolled over and smashed the snooze on my alarm clock. I went out on the back porch for a smoke and dialed Jen.

😄Hello?

😄Hey, it's bruiser.

😄You called!

😄I told you I would.

😄 So, are we going out tonight?

👨🍳 You like Italian?

😄 Does the Pope shit in the woods?

👨🍳 I don't know. Do bears wear funny hats?

😄 If they're Russian circus bears drunk on vodka they do. ** (if you read the Lucy post, that's where I got the Russian bear part from)

👨🍳 How does 7:30 sound?

😄 Perfect!

She gave me the address to her house across town. She told me to knock and if she wasn't ready, one of her roommates would grab the door. We parted, and I dialed another number.

👨🍳 'ello?

👨🍳 Antonio! It's Bruiser, how are you my friend?

👨🍳 BRUISER!! I haven't heard from you in weeks! How are you doing?

😄 Good, good. I need a favor.

👨🍳 Anything for you.

You see, Antonio just happened to be a chef at a really nice Italian place. He's a friend of a friend and I swept the parking lot next to the restaurant. Well, since he's a friend of a friend, I decided to start sweeping the restaurant for free. Hell, it was next door and it only took me 5 minutes.

😄 I need your finest table tonight.

👨🍳 Is that all? I was expecting a body to be moved. Sure, You've got it. What time?

😄 About a quarter 'till 8.

👨🍳 I'll tell the host to give you the special treatment just for you.

🤖My hero.

We hung up, and I relaxed until the date.

I clean up pretty damn well. Shaved, scrubbed, and looking handsome, I drove over to her place. I was wearing my tailored wool khaki colored slacks, black turtle next and a black jacket. I looked like a Bruiser sized Steve McQueen.

I pulled up and rang the doorbell. Her roommate answered the door in PJ's and a pint of ice cream.

🤖Yes?

🤖Hi, is Jen here?

🤖... What?

🤖I'm sorry, I was looking for (address), is this the right place?

🤖Uhhhh... OH! Yes! I'm sorry, you must be Bruiser!

🤖Yes.

🤖Sure! Come on in. I.. uh.. You're not what I was expecting.

🤖No problem.

🤖Lemme go get her.

Her roommate nearly busted her ass up the stairs, running to go get Jen. I just stood there, hands in pocket, looking around. To be honest, It sounded like a wrestling match up there. Running around, giggling, a yelp or two. Christ, what the fuck was going on up there.

Finally, She came down the stairs.

😲Wow.

😲You beat me to it. You look fabulous.

😲And you clean up like no one I've ever seen.

😲Why thank you. Are you ready?

😬Let's go!

I held the door open for her and we walked out to the Hummer. Little did I know, we had drawn a crowd of her roommates looking out through the windows.

😬You have GOT to be kidding me.

😬...Huh?

😬A Hummer?

😬Oh... I'm sorry, I know it's really ostentatious, but it's all I've got.

😬This thing is sex on four wheels. I grew up tear-assing around Florida in my older brother's jeep. Tell me you go off-road.

😬Whenever I've got the time.

I opened the door for her and helped her in. She just beamed at me.

😬Thanks.

We were on our way to the restaraunt.

😬So, how does a street sweeper afford a Hummer and nice clothes?

I looked over at her with a deadly serious look.

😬I'm a mid-level enforcer for the mob.

😬... what...

😬I wanted to tell you sooner, but I couldn't work up the courage. I didn't know how you were going to take it.

😬I...ah... wow...

😬I hope this isn't a deal breaker.

😬Well... I mean... Really?

😬No. Are you kidding me? I worked hard and saved up for this.

😂Haha! You're pretty smooth, you know that?

😏Honestly, I'm just being myself.

She just looked over at me, playing with her hair, and smiling that smile. We got to the restaurant, parked, and made our way to the front door. I held it open and we walked into the foyer. I saw the host brighten up.

😏Bruiser! We've been expecting you. May I take your jacket? What a beautiful woman *kisses her hand* a pleasure to have you!

I palmed him a 20 and he lead us to an out of the way table that was set in a small nook towards the back. It was, to say the least, romantic. Candles, low light, the whole schmaltzy nine yards. Jen was eating it up with a spoon. Well, we ordered and Antonio brought it out himself.

🍷 Compliments of the house for a dear friend and his beautiful date.

You couldn't sandblast the grin off of her face.

😂Dear friend, huh? Sure you're not in the mob?

😏More like a friend of a friend.

Well, we ate, talked about everything under the sun. We found out that we had a lot in common. We both came from lower middle class backgrounds, both the first in the family to go to college, and we both didn't have it easy growing up. It turns out that she was a year older than I was and that she loved to dance. We sat there for hours until i felt like it was time to go.

😏Do you like taking walks?

She smiled and nodded. We bid our farewells and drove over to my place. My Apt. Complex was close by and was built around a large pond with a walkway and benches around it. We just strolled and talked, and sat, and looked at the ducks. The full moon made it the perfect evening. She yawned and I decided it was time for me to take her back home. I pulled up, opened the door and helped her out. We finally got up to the porch and she started playing with her keys.

😂Can I be honest?

😏Is there any other way?

😂I had the best night of my life tonight. (I started to shurg it off, but she stopped me) No.

Really. I've never been out on a date like this. You're such a gentleman, and the dinner, and jeeze, the walk around the pond. It was so amazing. I felt like a princess tonight. Thank you. I really hope we can go out again.

😊 Well, you're very welcome. And of course we'll go out again.

😊 Really?!

😊 I promise.

😊 Soon?

😊 Soon.

And then i tore a page out of my Dad's play book. I shook her hand, winked, and turned toward the car. I could hear him now...

😊🍷 Always leave them wanting more. Always.

We fell in love.

Hard.

Jim, Fred, and a severed limb:

I was driving Jim around the back of the property where Fred lived. I decided that they should get well acquainted with one another and develop a stable working relationship.

😬 Alright, be sure to clean by the dumpsters. That's important with this place.

???
😬 By the dumpsters?

😬 Yeah. You know, open the gate, go in there, and clean between them.

???
😬 ...oh...kay?

😬 I'll be around front if you need me!

I sped off toward the front and started working. I figured it would only be a matter of minutes before Jim would come screaming around the corner, giant raccoon in tow.

Well, shit for sure, Jim came screaming around the corner. In fact, he was running so hard that he lost his footing and went ass over teacups on the pavement.

🤩 BRUISER! BRUISER!

I got a knowing look on my face

😬 What's the matter, Jim?

🤩 There's a goddamn.. THING back there!

😬 Thing?

🤩 And... oh god. OH GOD, BRUISER!

By this point I was starting to get a little freaked out myself. It was a raccoon for God's sake.

😬 Spit it out, Jim.

🤩 Bruiser... There's a raccoon back there.

😬 Ye-

🤩 No. Listen. It's feeding on an arm.

😓...

😡A GODDAMN ARM, BRUISER!

😓Oh F U C K! Are you serious?!

😡LOOK AT MY GODDAMN FACE, MAN! I'M NOT KIDDING!

I ran as fast as I could around the back. The wind was catching the gate to the dumpsters.
BANG *BANG* *BANG* . I got out the flashlight, took a deep breath, and opened the gate. In large sweeping motions, I bathed the area in light.

And there it was. A fucking arm hanging out of the dumpster with Fred looking at me 😨 underneath it.

😨WHAT IN THE FUCK! OH GOD!

I tried to back peddle out of the area and ended up falling backwards. My eyes were drawn to the arm and back down to 😨Fred. When I finally stopped screaming, I noticed something really odd about the arm. I stood up and inched closer to it.

😨*squeak squeak*

😨AHH! Oh Jesus. What the fuck is going on.

I reached out and gave it a tug. The entire damn thing fell to the ground with a hollow *whump*.

A fucking mannequin arm. A fucking mannequin arm with a note taped to it.

"Dear Bruiser,

Aren't paybacks a bitch?

-Jim

P.S. - you can thank Mark for the idea"

Behind me, Jim started clapping.

😨What the fuck is that, Jim?!

A smug grin starts to cross his lips

😨That, Bruiser, is how the job is done.

And that, my friends, is how I knew Jim was ready.

Not what you were expecting interludes; Scattered in bits between other stories:

I saw her the very next night at work. She walked out, gave me a huge hug, and had a cup of coffee with me. And as the nights passed, winter finally released his icy grasp on spring. We went out more, we hung out after work, I'd go over to her house and make her roommates jealous, she would come out with my friends and I and make them jealous, we went to parties and spent long weekends wrapped up and worn out in each other.

I was the happiest I'd ever been.

She was the happiest she'd ever been.

Well, Spring wore into summer. We lived fast and easy and didn't give a goddamn what anyone thought. We were two free spirits working our asses off and having the time of our lives at the same time.

We were having our cake and eating it too.

Bruiser Exacts Revenge:

Being that my job was during third shift nearly 7 days a week, I didn't have a lot of time for being social. In fact, My life consisted of working my ass off, having a few too many brews in the morning with my dad, and playing video games. And that was that. My only entertainment came from an overnight radio show called Coast to Coast AM. This show is one of those radio shows in the middle of the night that brings the 🧟 crawling out of the woodwork. Listen to it long enough, and you start to go a little 🧟 yourself.

Well, I had finally gotten a weekend off and decided to see some long lost friends. We met up at a buddy's house and just started getting ripped at noon. Six hours and 3 kegs later, we were still rocking. Well, the night started getting interesting when Dave showed up.

Dave is a prick.

I do not like Dave.

Dave came up to me waving a Rolling Rock in my face.

😏 So, it's been a while since we've seen you, Bruiser

😏 Yeah, finally got a weekend off.

😏 Run out of trash to pick up?

😏 Watch it.

😏 *turning to his Sea-Donkey girlfriend* Yeah, this guy actually picks up shit I throw down. I know, Right?!

😏 Haha! You're a fucking riot, Dave. I'd stop if I were you.

😏 What are you going to do-

- and I swear to god, it's like he re-enacted the scene from Top Gun -

😏 What are you going to do... Garbage *brushes my shoulder off* Man?

🚗 Don't you drive a Subaru Baja?

He then threw his bottle down in front of me.

😏 Aren't you going to pick that up?

Then, something deep within my soul broke loose. It was if every fiber of my being ran taught with rage.

😄 You're funny, Dave. I'll see you later.

😬 That's what I thought. Have fun picking up garbage! Garbage man! Maybe I drive a Baja, but at least I don't drive a garbage truck!

Fast forward two days.

I went back to work. The first night was rainy as hell and I spent many hours picking up as much garbage water as I possibly could. Being that this was during summer, I let it steep in the hot TN sun during the day. I then went out the next night to a property that had a Mexican place. I then proceeded to throw as much rotting beef into the back of the hopper as I could. This shit was so nasty I was dry heaving and gagging.

I disposed of my gloves and hopped back into the truck. You see, I knew where Dave lived.

I killed the lights when i pulled onto his street. I crept up, pulled around, and backed up to the front of his "bitchen' Subaru Baja". I should mention that he had "Death Cab for Cutie" sticker on the windshield.

I raised the hopper and rancid garbage water started pouring out of the back. I put a face mask on and hit the release for the hopper door. The entire back end opened up and vomited forth the most disgusting shit I had ever seen, smelled, heard. The stink was so putrid it raped every one of my senses.

His car was buried in rancid beef-garbage soup.

Dave's sunroof was open.

My phone rang at 2p.m the day after I hosed Dave's car.

😄 I'm asleep

😬 ALRIGHT, MOTHERFUCKER! I KNOW YOU DID IT! YOU'RE GOING TO FUCKING PAY!

😄 What the fuck are you talking about, Dave.

😬 YOU KNOW WHAT THE FUCK I'M TALKING ABOUT! MY CAR IS COVERED IN GARBAGE AND ROTTING MEAT!

😏 I thought you owned a truck.

😏 It's both a car AND a truck, asshole.

😏 It wasn't me. If it'll make you feel better, I'll come over and take a look.

😏 You'll come over here and clean it up!

😏 I can't hear you. Spit the dick out of your mouth *hangs up*

Well, I'm a man of my word, so I rolled back over and set my alarm for 6pm, a few hours before work. After taking my sweet ass time showering and getting ready, I went over to Dave's. I could see he cleaned up most of the garbage and was using a pressure washer to hose out the inside of the car. I parked the Hummer off to the side and hopped out.

😏 It doesn't look that bad

😏 I'm going to have you arrested.

😏 For what?

😏 Vandalism!

😏 I don't see any vandalism.

😏 It was covered in garbage and rotting beef! You vandalized my car!

🤔 So, what you're saying is, you cleaned up all of the evidence.

😏

😏 Good one, Dave!

😏 This is all your fault!

I turned the pressure washer off, walked up to Dave, and grabbed him by his collar.

😏 Look, asshole... You need to realize that the true mark of a man is not what he does for a living *motions over shoulder* or what he drives, or how much money his parents make. You've been given everything to you on a silver platter like it was your goddamn birthright. Everything I have, everything my parents have, we've all had to work our asses off. At the end of my workday, I have a beer and look at myself covered head to toe in grime. And you know what? I feel good. I feel good because I know I put in a hard day's work and that I earned my

keep. What the fuck do YOU do after work?



I-I-I-I-I don't have a job.



That's what I thought.

I let him go and started to walk off. I stopped, turned around, and pointed.



You're lucky that whoever did this was so nice. I know people that would have snapped your neck like a goddamn twig. Think about that next time you feel like looking down your nose at someone.

I hopped into the Hummer, started the engine, and started to drive off. I leaned out of the window on my way by.





BY THE WAY, NICE FUCKING BAJA, ASSHOLE!

Tranny Hooker: Pt. 1

Little is known about the North American Transvestite Hooker. The only help I can lend in this scientific endeavor is to expound on my own personal dealings with the one they call, "LUCY".


It was a bitter cold February night; a night so cold you swear you could hear your breath crystallize. I was running way ahead of schedule and decided to stop in for coffee at the Citgo. This being the only open establishment on a late Friday night, I had little choice in the matter. I went into the station, poured my cup, and was going over the log sheet for that night when Bryce walked into the station. It should be noted that there are only 4 types of people out this late at night: Cops, Drunks, Freaks, and Sweepers.

 Hey Bruiser, What's going on?


 Not much, man. Just looking over the rest of my night.


 Lemme see *grabs the clipboard*


Some of my run was in a rough area of town and Bryce liked to keep an eye on me in case things ever got out of hand.


 Oh man, such and such place looks new


 Yeah, haven't had it before. I'm about to head over there next in case it's really hosed up

 So... you've never been there?


 Nope. Why?

 Oh, no reason *get's this shit eating grin on his face*

 No, not tonight. You tell me what the fuck is out there, Bryce.

 Well, a lady by the name of Lucy is out there. If you're lucky, you'll meet her.

By this time, I had finished my coffee and had run out of bullshittng time.

 Whatever, Bryce. I'll see you later.

 Oh, I'm counting on it.

I shrugged him off and headed to the place. It was a run down grocery store and a barren strip

mall at the edge of town.

Now, it's about 20 degrees outside, and I'm doing my once-around the property. You know, looking at shit, pissing behind the dumpster, pausing for a smoke break, generally fucking off. I pull up to the front of the property, turn on the leaf blowers, and mask up. Now, it was sometime in between looking at shit and smoking that I failed to notice an African American woman leaning against one of the brick columns. She didn't look like a crack head, didn't look like she was carrying a gun, and was dressed normally for the weather. I chalked it up to she was an employee waiting for a ride. So, I go about my sweeperly duties and finish blowing out the curb lines and hop back in my truck. It has now been 15 minutes since I pulled onto the property, and that woman is still there. I sweep the entire lot in 30 minutes, and that woman is STILL there.

Now, I was still sort of green, and I still had a shred of morality. I pulled up, hopped out, and the conversation went something like this:

👤Ma'am, are you alright? It's awful cold out here, and I noticed you've been standing here for a while. I just wanted to make sure you were okay.

👤Oh yes, honey, I'm fine... Just waiting.

I was about 15 feet away and didn't notice anything wrong, so I shrugged and started back for the truck. She called to me and I turned around

👤Oh, sweetie, do you have a light? I can't seem to find mine.

The woman waves a cigarette in the air and smiles at me. Now, I'm a smoker, and I know what it's like to only have one half of an addiction at any given time. So, I say sure and I walk back towards her. I closed within 5 feet, and well.... Something wasn't right. Some primal alarm bell went off in my head, but it was too late... I has already close to her.....

.... I think I noticed her Man-Hands first. I mean, damn. She had bigger paws than me. Seriously, I think maybe she could use these things in a boxing match with a drunk Russian circus bear. I flicked my lighter, and it's when she bent down to light her cigarette, the final piece of this fucked up 1000 piece kitten jigsaw puzzle fell into place... The thought process went through my mind like this:

{ Hmm.. That better be some sort of advanced cancerous tumor under her chin... Nope, that's an Adams apple... Great.... This is a tranny. }

She said thanks for the light, and I started to beat fucking tracks back to my truck. She called for me again, and I turned around halfway back to my truck..

👤Hey, you ever take a walk on the wild side, baby?"

👤 No thanks, I need to work

👤 Well baby, 15 dollars and you could ride me all night long!

👤 Ma'am, please, I need to get going

and the only description of this voice would be if Charlton Heston, Prince, and Barry White all jerked off into a turkey baster and artificially inseminated Weezy Jefferson WHILE she was toking up on a crack pipe in addition to snorting a mixture of Meth and fiber glass, and this would be the fucked up mutant bastard child's voice.

👤 I ain't no ma'am.





...

I think at that moment, my penis actually retreated into my stomach and my eyes, ears, and rectum all started bleeding at the same time. I got back into my truck and high tailed it out of there... I was in shock the rest of the night, and prayed to God, Buddha, Jesus, and the Easter Bunny to strike me down with lightning and pestilence so that I may never remember that moment again...


They didn't listen.


Lucy- Part 2


 You want to help us clean up the streets?


 Next time you want to use a pun, just shoot me in the leg and be done with it.


Well, it turns out that the city, in their infinite wisdom, was going to be setting up an inner city preschool right across from where Lucy hangs out. The cops were trying to clean up the area to make it safer for the children. It turns out that Lucy, the tranny call girl she is, kind of posed a threat to children.


 we can bust him on trespassing. But we need something like solicitation to make it stick.


 *GASP!* you mean to tell me she's a he?! Nooooooooo. Get out of town.


 Let's just say that...evidence... supports... it... BWAHAHAHAHAHA!


 Enough! What do you want from me?

 Well, we need to use you as bait. When you pick her up, we'll roll in and bust her.

 That's not going to work.


 And why not?


 Two reasons. One, I'm not having it on the books that I picked up a Tranny callgirl. Two, unless you put a wire on me to record the actual 'Hey, get in the car and let's fuck' portion of the conversation, your solicitation won't hold up in court.


 Alright, 21 Jump Street, how do you know so much?

 I own the entire Miami Vice series on DVD.

 You card.

 He's there every night. You use my truck, pick him up, and then you can bust him. It should take all of 2 minutes. You put away your tranny, I get to work for the rest of the night.

 Deal. Meet me across the street behind that other strip mall at around 1am tomorrow night.

 You got it.

Now, I wasn't totally sure if what I said was correct. And the only thing Miami Vice taught me was how to pull off Pastels and take down coke rings. But I was DAMN sure not to have my name associated in some official document with the words "Transvestite Prostitute".

So, I show up at the appointed time, and Bryce is there in plain clothes with a few other cops. I hop out and toss him the keys.

👮 There you go.

👮 Thanks man!

👮 Just be sure to return it with a full tank. Maybe take her out for a wash.

👮 You're hilarious.

👮 That's why they pay me the big bucks.

He starts it up, and drives across the street. About 10 minutes later, Lucy walks around from behind the corner. I can barely see what's going on from our hiding spot across the street, but eventually He gets into my truck, and they make their way across the street. I was told to stay back when they rolled in just in case something happened.

The truck pulled in. On go the cop lights. Out tumbles Lucy.

👮 👮 👮 FREEZE, DON'T MOVE! ON THE GROUND!

I'm just staring in amazement. I'm actually watching a bust. NEAT!

Bryce gets out, Lucy is just staring at the scene with his hands up.

👮 GET THE FUCK ON THE GROUND!


👮 But you said that you would love me, baby!


👮 ON THE GROUND!


👮 *getting on the ground* 'Dis is bullshit! 'Dis is entrapment!


👮 I can it. *cuffs go on* I'm goig to read you you rights. You have the-


👮 I know, I know. Pshhhh. I thought I was gonna get some dick tonight.

 *finishing up* Do you understand your rights?

 yeah yeah yeah.

 Good. Cooperate with us and we can work something out.

 For some dick?

 ... watch your head when you get in the car.

I got my keys back, got a thank you from the 5-0, and was sent on my way. Turns out Lucy smoked the same brand of cigarette I did and left a full pack in the truck.

I threw them out.

You just never know.

The most disturbing thing I've seen

I tried to do the best job I could, you know? It's like I went out there every night trying to make my little section of the world a cleaner place... And then someone had to shit on it...
...No, literally... I mean take a shit on one of my properties.

I turn into this particular property on a night just like any other, pull to the front, and start filling out the log. I guess at this point I better back up and describe where this place is...

Imagine a dead strip mall... And brother, I mean dead. There is a Dollar General, A store titled "Everything's Possible Bargain Center" (do you carry the 2nd season of Captain Planet? Is everything REALLY possible?), and on the very end, a club house for Christian teens.

But anyway, the property is surrounded by a shady assed apartment complex, pawn store, not one, but THREE abandoned cars, and, oh yes, that's right.. an after hours club.

So, I finish filling out my log when, what do my weary eyes spy on yonder curb?! 'Tis true! A crackwhore methinks I spy! Now, I'm used to dealing with crackwhores, transvestite prostitutes, drunks, retarded teens, and douchebags; so this shouldn't be any problem at all. Just flip on the high beams, point the truck at them, and wait it out... Right?.

Riiight.

So the crack whore is 20 yards away as the crow flies, high beams bathing her (it) in light, and nowhere to go but back to whatever sewer she (it) came from. So, what does the crackwhore decide to do in that situation? Well, what every rational, sane, and remotely human-fucking-being out there would do.....

DROP TROU AND BARE-ASS SHIT ON THE PARKING LOT.

glorious.

You know, what if you could solve EVERY remotely challenging situation like that?

"Oh man, the batteries are dead in the remote... Guess I better drop my pants and shit all over it!"

"Hmm... I really like Folger's Dark Roast, but I really want to try the French Blend... I KNOW!! I'll shit right here in the middle of the aisle!"

"You know, I've got a date tonight... I can't decide on Chilli's or TGI Friday's... I'm going to shit myself and see where the stars take us!"

The human mind can't process the sight of a cracked out homeless woman shitting in the

middle of a strip mall. She just pulled up her pants after that and ran away. If I hadn't just received the Vulcan Mind-Fuck from seeing something like that, maybe I would have done something about it... Like run her down, or shot myself in the head... I couldn't take it anymore and I just left. Mound of shit and all.

But, amazingly, the story isn't over. And this REALLY fucked with me.

About 15 minutes later, I had finally calmed my frazzled nerves and drove back to the property. Now, listen to me very carefully. I want to be as clear as possible when I tell you this, because I can only say it once.

When I came back, the pile of shit was gone. Oh, you could see where the deed was done, but the shit itself? Vanished. In the space of 15 minutes.

I'll let that soak in...

WTF

"I knew you'd be involved somehow" - Bryce:

One Friday night, I was supposed to cover for one of our weekend folks. Well, something got SNAFU'd and I ended up scoring a night off. Being that I was 5 hours behind the curve, I decided to go to a friend's house and power drink.

You see, when you're a workin' man, you don't have time for fruity drinks with umbrellas or watered down cocktails. You have time for whiskey. And right the fuck now.

This isn't a "sweeper story" per se, but it's the story of how I got the name, Bruiser. And it is a story very near and dear to my heart.

It was one of those magical parties that started out as, "Let's have a few people over and drop the hammer" and blossomed into "There are 200 people here, some guy is puking on a tree, and who the fuck is finger-banging his girlfriend in my utility closet."

I'm minding my own business, drinking my Crown Royal, and generally having a good time with my friends. Well, all of a sudden my friend Jen comes running up to me. It should be noted that I was Jen's appointed body guard at all parties. We had one of those "Big Brother - Little Sister" relationships.

😬Bruiser! I need your help!

😬*setting down bottle of whiskey* What is it?

😬Some creepy assholes are trying to feel me up. I think one of them is trying to sell cocaine!

According to second hand accounts, you could physically see the change from fun-time party boy to killing machine.

😬Point them out.

Jen points out three scrawny pukes standing off in the corner. One was shifty eyed and kept his hands shoved in his pockets.

😬I'll take care of it.

I make my way over to the three amigos. I put on my best 😬 face.

😬Hey guys, how's it going?

The lead puke speaks up

☺Sup, dude.

☺Not much, I'm just here to tell you that you guys are leaving.

☺What'd you say?

☺I said that I was here to tell you that you guys are leaving. As in, right the motherfuck now


☺what the fuck dude? What's your problem?

☺I don't like the way you look.

☺So? Do you fuckin' live here?

☺Nope, but my buddy does. My buddy is visiting with his girlfriend right now, and I don't want to bother him. So I'm doing my buddy a favor and letting you guys leave uninjured


Shady guy two speaks up

 Why don't you go back to sucking a dick?

☺That's one.

☺What's one?

☺Everybody gets one. You go for two, I hurt you.

 I'm going to fuck you up, man.

☺And there's two.

I give puke number one a massive uppercut to the stomach and deflate his lungs. When he doubles over, I knee him in the face and send him to the carpet. I then focus on the other two.

 WHAT THE FUCK, MAN!

He tries to make a run for it and I trip him. After he catches the side of a coffee table, I grab him by the back of his jacket and drag him out of the door. Guy number one is down for the count. I then focus on guy number three. He's pressed up against the wall, eyes bloodshot, and looking scared as shit. In a calm, even voice, I said

☺You dealing?

He nods in the affirmative.

😬 You have 2 seconds to get out of that door. An instant longer and it'll be blink once for yes and twice for no.

The guy beats tracks for the door, falls on the door jamb, and continues out to the front lawn.

WEEEELLLLLLLLL, sometime during that time, someone called the cops. I walk out front to a few squad cars.

👮 What the hell are YOU doing here?

😬 Hey Bryce!

👮 *taking stock of the injured* Jesus! What the fuck happened?!

😬 They sexually assaulted a young female. I assisted them out of the door.

Jen comes running up to my side

😬 One of those assholes shoved their hand down the back of my pants!

😬 They're holding.

👮 Are they?

😬 Blow and god knows what else.

👮 I'll be right back.

They shake the three guys down and find 4 grams of Coke, \$1200 in twenties, and two knives between the 3 of them.

👮 Wow, I really have to thank you guys. You just filled my quotas for the entire month of May. The only gift I can give you is a ride to county lockup. I sure hope that'll do!

😬 WHAT ABOUT THE ASSHOLE THAT BEAT US UP!

👮 He aided in the apprehension of three suspects whose charges include sexual battery, possession of a deadly weapon, possession of cocaine with intent to sell, and from the way you gentleman look, I bet there's some destruction of property in there. You play nice, and we'll see about sliming those charges down. In you go!

And away they went into squad cars.

😓 I'm really sorry, Bryce, I didn't know someone would call the cops. I'll answer for assault charges.

👮 don't worry about it. I have a feeling that those punks are going to forget how they got bloodied.

😓 You're the man. Have I ever told you that?

👮 Only every time you see me. I bet the party is breaking up. You sleeping here?

😓 You know it.

👮 good deal. I'll catch you later.

He started to walk away and turned around half way to his car.

👮 When I got the call on the radio, I somehow knew you'd be involved. I mean, what Friday night wouldn't be complete without you making work for me.

Naked Hiker:

Like most of these stories, I was out on a night like any other. I was at a property that was deserted at this time of night, thinking about what brand of beer I wanted when I got home. It was either Guinness Stout, or Dose Equis... But I digress.

I was checking the curb when I heard a very proper British Voice behind me.

😊 Pardon me, sir.

A chill shot up my spine. How the fuck did I not hear this guy is beyond me.

😊 GAH! What?!

It didn't take me long to realize that the well groomed man with an expensive hiking backpack behind me was buck ass naked.

😊 Very sorry, but I was wondering if you could point me to *wrestles with a road atlas* Interstate 24.

😊 No problem, It's about a mile down this street. Which way are you headed?

😊 West, towards Interstate 40.

😊 Yeah, You're going to want to take the Nashville exit. It's about 25 miles to the I40 exit.

😊 Very good, thank you for your time!

😊 Yeah, no problem.

I turned back around and thought about asking him why a naked British man was hiking the interstate system in Middle TN.

😊 Say, why-

But he was gone. I ran around the back of the building looking for the guy. Nothing. He couldn't have gone far, so I checked some other places, but the guy just vanished just as quickly as he appeared.

I walked around the front of the building to finish changing cans. There was a 20 dollar bill wedged under the corner of the can that most certainly wasn't there before. I picked it up and noticed tiny writing on the edge.

"Thanks for the directions, Mate."

Just another one of the many mysteries of the night.

Not what you were expecting pt 3:

It was a Saturday afternoon. We'd been making love and were wrapped up in each other.

😏Bruiser?

😏Yes?

😏If I tell you something, do you promise not to freak out?

😏Of course.

The multitude of things that ran through my head ranged from "Oh god she's pregnant" to "oh god, there's another guy" If it was the latter, I was already planning the man's demise. It would be a simple case of finding out who, and then-

😏I love you.

- what... oh man... I've never... who... HUH?! I've never heard that before.
She rolled over.

😏Say something.

I ran my fingers through her tussled hair. God, she was beautiful. The lithe body Creamy skin, dark eyes, flawless skin. And her personality, christ! It was amazing to know th-

😏I love you too.

And she smiled.

That smile is burned into my brain forever.

It won't go away no matter how hard I try.

God, my life was good.

Duck and cover- A sweeper's July 4th:

Around Independence Day, Parking lots across the state fill with tents selling fireworks. Usually, they are family run and keep a family member over night at the tent to watch over the wares.

The tent in question had the brilliant idea of using a PODS (Portable on Demand Storage) unit to lock everything up in over night. If the tent wasn't centrally located in a rough part of town, this would have been a great idea.

Well, I pulled into the lot, and my sweeper senses started tingling. I cruised over the the tent and found some kids robbing the PODS unit. The had used a hammer to bash through the front and open the door. Fireworks were splayed out everywhere in front of the unit. Caught red-handed, the kids started to bolt. I called central dispatch (Bryce was on vacation) and the said they would send someone over.

Yes, the children bailed.

Not before they threw a lit cigarette into the PODS unit.

I saw smoke start to roll out of the unit, decided the discretion was the better part of valor, and watched from a distance.

What ensued was, to this date, the most awesome thing I've seen. Fireworks, smoke bombs, EVERYTHING in the unit went up at once in a maelstrom of gunpowder and color.

It was like a fucking WWII reenactment.

It went on like this for a solid 10 minutes. The cop showed up, looked at the situation, and called the fire department. They had no choice to let it burn out.

God, that was awesome.

The nacho cheese incident:

If time would allow, Mike and I would team up and end our night that much faster. Towards the end of one of these nights, Dad and I were sweeping behind a center with a hotdog place. Well, behind the hotdog place, sitting in all of it's glory, was a box of restaurant size cans of dead nacho cheese.

😁Want to have some fun?

😁🍷Of course.

😁How does 25 cans of nacho cheese sound?

😁🍷I bet it would look awesome if we ran over them.

😁Exploding cans of cheese!

😁🍷Exploding cans of cheese. Get out and set up one of them.

I hopped out and set up one of the huge cans sideways about 20 yards from Mike

😁Okay, let 'er rip!

He gunned the engine and hit the can at 30 miles an hour. *POW!* the can exploded, cheese going everywhere over the truck.

😁🍷Muwahahaha! Nice!

😁My turn. Set up 5 in a row.

Mike set them up, I dropped the hammer, and hit the cans at 50 miles and hour. *POP POP POP POP POP!!!*. It was like a giant tidal wave of cheese hit my truck. Dead cans were getting trapped under it, leaving a trail of sparks behind me.

This continued on for the next 10 minutes. Two grown men giggling like school girls at exploding cans of cheese.

It wasn't our fault they sounded like gunfire. It wasn't our fault there was an apartment complex right in front of us.

A cop pulled around behind the store right as Mike nailed another can. From his angle, he couldn't see where the sound was coming from. He bolted out of his car.

🚓 DROP THE WEAPON!

🤖🤖???

The cop finally sees our trucks, covered in Nacho cheese.

🤖 What the hell?

🤖 Exploding cans of Nacho cheese, sir.

🤖 ...why?

🤖 They won't go into the truck, so we have to run them over to save space. EPA and Company regulations. My hands are tied.

🤖 No guns?

🤖 No guns.

🤖 CARRY ON!

And he drove off.

Well, eventually the night ended, and we drove our trucks back to the barn. It turns out that the wash-bay was down for repairs again, so we had to leave a maintenance slip.

DRIVER: Bruiser

TRUCK: The one covered in nacho cheese.

REPAIR REQUESTED: I can't see out of the windshield very well.

NOTES: You should have been there.

DRIVER: Mike

TRUCK: The other one covered in nacho cheese.

REPAIR REQUESTED: Ditto

NOTES: Yeah, it was pretty bitchin'!

Bruiser stops a Robbery:

I was pulling up to the same shady area that the "Crackwhore Shitting" incident took place. Everything was about as normal as things could be for this job. I hopped out of my truck and was making a reach for the leaf blowers when I heard a noise behind the building. It sounded like glass bottles breaking against the pavement. I instantly thought, "Great, some teenage pukes are fucking up my property".

Thinking that I was in for some prime time fun, I eased the truck around the corner, killed the lights, and got back out. I grabbed my trusty tire iron just in case and went for a looksee. Expecting to scare off some punks, i dashed from behind a dumpster.

Well, instead of finding a group of teenagers, i found short guy dressed like a 🧑🏻 trying to get into the back door of the Christian teen center. For some reason Hudson Hawk over there didn't see me. Now, it should be noted that i had been playing way too much Splinter Cell at home.

I ducked around to the next dumpster and skirted behind the guy. I was closing in from about 10 yards when my foot crunched on a shard of glass. SHIT!

The 🧑🏻 turns around very slowly and we just stare at each other for what seemed like forever. I finally got my wits about me and shouted the only thing I could think of.

FREEZE, SCUMBAG!



Who did I think I was, T.J. Hooker?

The guy is blocked to his left by a dumpster and an AC unit on the right. I was standing in the way of escape. The guy makes a charge and the fight is on!

He lands a shoulder into my chest, trying to pull a spin move to get around me. I rear back and jam the handle of the tire iron under his ribcage.

🧑🏻OOOF!

And just like that, the fight was off. He crumpled to the ground like a sack of potatoes. I rolled him over and put a knee into his chest and take off the ski mask.

👊👊 GET THE FUCK OFF OF ME

🧑🏻No way, cockstain

I was using full force to keep this guy down. Eventually he just resigned when I threatened to strangle him.

👊👊 You a cop?!

😏 Nope. You just got busted by a street sweeper. How does that make you feel?

Apparently it didn't make him feel too good

👊👊 GET THE FUCK OFF OF ME

I reached in my back pocket and grabbed my phone. By this point in the job, I had Bryce on speed dial.

📞 Bryceman, Go.

😏 YOU NEED TO GET TO CROSSINGS! I'VE GOT A ROBBER PINNED BEHIND THE STORE!

📞 Be there in two, I'll try to get you some backup sooner!

😏 Hurry it up, this guy is pissed. *hangs up and looks at the perp* Aren't cha, sweetheart?

he started struggling again so I knocked his head into the asphalt.

😏 Stop struggling.

👊👊 I'LL KILL YOU!

WHAM!!

😏 Stop struggling.

👊👊 I'M GOING TO SLIT YOUR GODDAMN THROAT

WHAM!!


😏 Motherfucker, look. I don't have any qualms about beating you to death. I'll claim self defense and be a hero. Stop struggling.


👊👊 YOU'RE FUCKING NUTS!

😏 Bwahahaha! Yes! I am!




The look of fear in this guy's eye is something I'll never forget.


Well, the cavalry showed up with lights and siren blasting. Bryce and crew drew down on us and told me it was okay to roll off of him and step back. They pick the guy up and a cute switchblade and a baggie fall out of his back pocket.

 Uh-oh! Someone just racked up more charges.

 That guy assaulted me! I want him arrested!

The cops look at him and pause.

   BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!

 Good one! Get in the fucking car.

I had to stay and give a statement and made Bryce promise me that I wouldn't have to testify or go to court or any other bullshit.

I looked at my watch.

I still had an entire night's worth of work in front of me.

Hard to Kill:

I've mentioned before about the quality of our equipment. The trucks, like an old loyal workhorse that had seen better days, were ready to be put out to pasture. This is the story of the last night of my favorite truck. May she rest in peace.

I was doing my sweeperly duties when I decided to start blowing off the curbs. I threw the truck in park, hopped out, and went to it. I started working when I saw movement out of the corner of my eye.

The truck was moving without me in it.

It had a slight lead on me, so I dropped the leaf blowers and ran after it. Throwing open the door, jumped in, and threw it back it park. You see, the truck had a nasty habit of slipping out of park and into drive. No big deal, I just parked it and engaged the E-Brake. Problem solved.

I finished with the leaf blowers, hopped into the truck, and hauled some ass to finish up the property.

Well, somewhere in the middle of Hauling and Ass, the control arm broke, thus locking the steering in the hard left position, sending the truck in circles.

😂 You have got to be fucking kidding me.

I said to no one in particular.

I radioed in about the problem.

😂 You're not going to believe this

😂🍺 I'll believe anything once. You were propositioned by a tranny, I believed that.

😂 Not the time, pop.

😂🍺 What's the problem?

😂 The damn steering in the truck is out. I'm going to need to get a lift back to the shop.

😂🍺 Alright, try to find a space you can leave it, I'll be there in twenty.

I hit the gas and tried to heave the wheel over, but no dice. I tried one more time when my night got a little worse. The truck wasn't stopping. Turns out the accelerator was stuck at about 15 miles an hour. I was now doing low speed doughnuts in a street sweeper. But the fun just didn't stop.

In the space of 30 seconds, I broke the door handle and snapped the key off in the ignition. I knew that the sourdough burger I had had a scant hour previous was going to come up in a big way. But suddenly, a moment of clarity hit me.

This was my truck's Swan Song.

After this, there would be no more.

So I did the only thing I could for my poor truck. I let her go out with a bang.

I wrenched on the throttle control for the blower motor, pulled it out to the point it broke in the full "on" position. I slammed the E-Brake (which barely ever worked), stopping long enough to grab my shit and bail out. I got back on the radio.

🗣️ You better get here if you want to see the show

🗣️ What's going on?

🗣️ You'll see. Oh... You'll see.

My next call was to Bryce. By this point, The E-Brake was screaming, smoking, and about to let go.

🗣️ Do you have time to kill?

🗣️ Gee, let me check with Mr. Clancy here. Yes. I do.

🗣️ Meet me over here. I'm having a funeral for my truck.


🗣️ There in 5.


I pulled a coke out of my bag, popped it open, and had a seat on the asphalt. The brake let go and the truck resumed it's spiral into oblivion. Since the Blower motor taps off of the main fuel line, and this was the last stop for the night, It would be a matter of 45 minutes before she was dry.

Mike finally showed up.

🗣️ Cool.


🗣️ *tossing him a coke* I know, right?


 I'd say this is it for the old girl


 I know.

Bryce was the next to show up

 This is the most awesome thing I've ever seen.


 Have a coke. This is the last show for the girl.


 Damn good truck.


 Damn good.

And it went on like that for 40 minutes. Three men standing there, sipping a coke, and just watching the old girl whine out her last ballad. Eventually, the blower motor let go, sending smoke pouring out of the rear stack. The old girl finally ran out of gas and sputtered to a stop, hidden behind a cloud of steam and smoke. She let out a rattling gasp. And just like that, she was gone.

I lit a cigarette and threw a salute.

 That'll do, girl. That'll do.

 Thanks for keeping my son safe all those long nights.

 Thanks for all of the laughs.

And I'll admit it. I got a little teary eyed.

 Thanks. For everything.

Post Script: We called the company wrecker, and they picked up the truck. That week, she was stripped for parts and sent to a scrap heap.

She died like she lived: Fast, hard, and on fire.

Hard to kill.

I'm not what you were expecting pt 4:

Summer was winding down, and the fall was cranking back up. I walked into the apartment after work to find Jen there sitting at the table.

☺Morning, beautiful! Let me grab a shower and I'll get to work on some breakfast.

☹We need to talk.

It wasn't the statement more than it was the tone. It was like all of the air was sucked out of the room.

☺What's wrong?

☹I... I...

And she started crying.

She explained that her mom was ill and that she needed to go back to Florida to take care of her siblings. She said it was looking like it was going to be a long time before she would be back up here. She kept saying that she loved me so much and she didn't know what I would say. I told her that family is important. I told her as much as I would miss her, she needed to be with her family. Nothing could make me stop loving her.

The truth is that it ripped my fucking guts out.

Over and over.

She was headed out in a few days. I helped her pack the old VW, and we were standing out in her driveway.

☺Call me when you get out on the road.

☹And when I get home

☺And every day

She wrapped her arms around me, kissed me long and sweet, and looked me dead in the eye with that smile.

☹I love you.

And with tears streaming down her face, she got into the car, and started it up. Before she pulled out, she stole a line from the movie Castaway and shouted,

😬 I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!!

I drank myself into oblivion that night.

Bruiser: 1 - Emo Kids: 0

I'm a pretty easy going guy, that's no lie. I tend to keep to myself when I'm out on the job, not causing much trouble, just doing my thing. There's only a few things that will set me off:

- 1) If you talk down to me
- 2) If you do something that knowingly impairs my job and / or makes fun of me

These children did both.

These children paid dearly.

I was working in a particularly rich part of town and almost ALMOST finished for the night when I witnessed 4 or 5 emo kids walking out of the grocery store.

Now, I'm not up on my social stereotypes. Simply put, I call it like I see it, coach. These teenagers were wearing very tight hooded sweatshirts, hoods up with graphics advertising some band I had never heard of. They wore jeans that were purchased from the women's department store. Footware consisted of converse sneakers spray painted various colors and written on in marker. Hair? Uncut and in an "emo slash" which, by consequence, is a double entendre.

I stopped to let them through on the crosswalk, and they just stood there. Staring at me. Laughing. Pointing.

Now, I don't really care what people think of me. In fact, I would say that I could really give not only one, but two shits about what these teens thought of me. But they decided to go a step further.

They threw an entire bag of fast food garbage down on the pavement.

Right. In. Front. Of. Me.

 FUCK YOU!

 Oh hell no.

I revved the engine and started to pop the truck at them. A look of sheer terror crossed their faces. I love that look. It's that look of "What the fuck did we just do". Because, what I've found, is that most people don't think you'll do anything. They just assume that you will tolerate that kind of behavior and pick it up because, hey, you're the hired help.

My buddy served two tours in Iraq driving M1-A1's on the outskirts of Bahgdad manning the 50

.cal. In our email's back and forth, I mentioned that I can now appreciate what he does a little bit more because of the amount of dust that gets kicked up into your eyes. When he came home, he presented me the goggles that he wore as a gift. I used those goggles to keep the dust out of my eyes every night, and they're still a sentimental thing to me.

I leaned my head out of the window, turned my ball cap backward, and pushed the goggles over my eyes.

They thought I was fucking nuts.

Little did they know, I was.

They started to run across the huge parking lot, but constricted by the tight pants they loved so much, they made an easy prey.

For some reason, the voice of a National Geographic narrator popped into my head.



The sweeper culls his prey from the pack

I was starting to lose my mind.

I caught up to them because these idiots didn't understand the idea of zigging and zagging. I then performed a textbook "dust off" i.e. separating the hopper from the intakes just enough to let forth a cloud of dust equal to, if not surpassing a biblical plague.

I zipped by them at a brisk 40 miles an hour, dusting them out and leaving them coughing and rubbing their eyes behind me. I swung back around, shut down the truck, and in goggles and all bellowed at the top of my lungs:



AND I WILL STRIKE DOWN UPON THEE WITH GREAT VENGEANCE AND FURIOUS ANGER
THOSE WHO WOULD ATTEMPT TO POISON AND DESTROY MY BROTHERS. AND YOU WILL
KNOW MY NAME IS THE LORD WHEN I LAY MY VENGEANCE UPON THEE!!!

The few patrons in the parking lot started applauding me. I took a bow, flipped off the still coughing teenagers, and roared off into the night.

Rematch: Bruiser vs. Ricers, Part 1!

A different night than the last story; a different town even.

Unfortunately, idiocy knows no geographic boundaries.

In my town, during the summer, when the days are hot and the nights are muggy, a battle is waged. During the day, the streets of my fair town are owned by workers, yuppie commuters, and traffic stacked so long it takes you 30 minutes to go 2 miles.

But during the night, oh the glorious night, the streets are laid siege by various factions.

Service workers: Parking lot sweepers, Main road sweepers, delivery trucks, road crews.

The Law: Brave men and women sworn to protect and serve. They go easy on Service workers because we're busy running place to place and often have to practice "Creative Driving" to get there on time.

Drunks: Only appear during the "Blitz". The "Blitz" occurs every Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights at 3 am. After the liquor stores are long closed and the bars are shutting down, my streets see an influx of drunk driving like never before.

The Kids: High School is out, the weather is warm, and the Yuppie spawn gather in empty lots. They spend their parents' money on body mods and "performance" parts for late model Japanese cars. They own the entire Fast and the Furious collection and jerk off onto a poster of Paul Walker... hourly.

Now that you have the full picture of summer nights, I want to start at the beginning.

A good friend of mine, JD, had just graduated from Nashville Auto Diesel College (NADC) a few weeks previous. Simply put, he knew his shit about all things automotive.

👉 Bruiser! Hey, they gave you a new truck, right?

👉 Well, as new as they come.

👉 What kind is it

👉 It's a 2004 Chevy chassis, 110k on the odo.

👉 Heavy duty?

👉 Of course

👉 Are you finished with work for tonight? (it was about 10pm)

👉 Well, being that a rouge low pressure is spinning over head, kicking up 30 mile and hour winds, dumping rain so hard the entire mid-state is under a flash flood warning, and I double bagged my cans last night, Yes. Yes I am.

👉 What are you doing right now?

👉 Riding the clock like a two dollar whore.

👉 Swing by my house.

I finished up the last remaining cans and sped over to his place. The garage door opened up and he motioned me in. We shook hands and shot the shit for a few minutes. And then he looked at me conspiratorially.

👉 I want you to take a look at something.

👉 Sure, what is it.

He threw a cloth back along the far work bench. Under it was a set of devices.

👉 These babies connect to the computer in your truck and let me... do stuff.

👉 Do stuff? Are you going to rape my truck, JD?

👉 No, this one will let me adjust things like your fuel injection system and, these other do other various things that you don't know about. I just got them off of eBay and I'm dying to try them out.

👉 Cute. But what's the point?

👉 I want to make you go fast.

👉 I like the way you think.

👉 One more thing.

And he pulls a fucking cold air intake out of a box.

👉 What the fuck?

🤔 This is off of my old truck. It's close, but I can make this work.

🤔 How long will all of this take?

🤔 The tuning part won't take long at all. I can finish it before you head back later tonight. That low isn't moving off anytime soon and there's a shit load of rain moving up from the Gulf. 5 gets you 10 that you're going to be in the same situation tomorrow night. Show back up and I'll drop this in here for you.

And that's exactly how it happened. I cooked the books on my logs, smoked cigarettes, and relaxed the rest of the night. Sure as shit, the rain didn't move off and the wind kept my properties fairly clean the next night. I showed up, repeated, and finally JD looked up at me under the hood.

🤔 Mwahahahaha!

🤔 She's done?

🤔 Let's take her out.

And boy did we take her out. I jammed down on the gas and the truck screamed down his neighborhood. I took it out on the interstate and reached a hair under a buck ten. This. Was. Amazing.

And little did I know, I would need everything this truck had the very next night.

Rematch: Bruiser vs. Ricers, Pt.2

Oh, trust me, it was stupid.

But it was that special kind of stupid where you look at the situation, you analyze the situation, and you come to the startling realization that you have to get involved. It is my hope that my actions taught these teens a lesson.

It had been two days since JD tuned my truck. Other than burning through fuel at a phenomenal rate, I didn't really get a chance to use my truck to her full potential. I was running my short route on a Friday, desperately wanting the weekend. I pulled onto one of my lots.

😏 You have GOT to be fucking kidding me.

The entire thing was covered in cars. Loud music, flashing lights, it was if bullshit was attacking all five of my senses. There must have been about 100 teenagers. It was like I stumbled upon a car club for the mentally challenged. To say that I got looks is like saying that the Pacific Ocean is damp. It was like I was a Martian that had just crash landed into their little world. I parked in the middle of them all and hopped out.

😊 Can I help you, sir?

😏 TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER!

😊 Excuse me, sir?

😏 Christ, knock off the sir shit, I'm 20.

😊 You look a lot older.

😏 I've been living hard. Who is in charge?

😊 I guess that would be Brent. He's up front in the red Civic hatchback.

😏 Thanks for your help. You get to live.

😊 What?!

😏 Nothing.

I hopped back in and rolled over to the red Civic hatchback. It was your standard Ricer affair. Red paint, huge fucking muffler that served no purpose, stickers for things that he didn't have under the hood, and my personal favorite, gauges that serve no purpose. I hopped back out and walked up to the biggest douche I've ever seen. This kid had three, count 'em, three pastel

collared shirts.

All of them were popped.

I saw those popped collars as a personal insult to everything holy and pure.

🤪You Brent?

🤪Depends.

🤪*exaggerated sigh* Fine, I'll play. What does it depend on?

🤪Who wants to know?

🤪Your friendly neighborhood street sweeper. I'm here to tell you that you, that hunk of shit you drive, and all of your friends are going to leave.

🤪Excuse me?

🤪I know you're dumb, but are you deaf too, Brent?

🤪Fuck off.

🤪No, I don't believe I will.

🤪Do you know who my father is?

🤪Brent, I could give a good goddamn who your father is. I don't care if he's the savior Lord Jesus Christ himself, risen from the dead to deliver us from evil. You're going to leave on way or the other.

🤪I'd like to see you try.

🤪Well, I could make a phone call and have the law run you off. But you know what? I've got a better idea. I'll race you down Broad, up Main, around the Square, and back out again. You win, I'll leave you alone for the night. I win, you and your friends hit the fucking bricks.

🤪You've got to be shitting me.


🤪I may be many things, Scooter, But I most certainly am not shitting you.

🤪You're racing with what? THAT!?

At this point I had rolled down the window and clipped a Jolly Roger window flag to the truck.


 Har Har Harrrrrrrrrrrr

 You're nuts.


 Yeah, pretty much. LET'S GO!

The scene was comical. His souped up Civic, my lumbering beast of cleanitude. We were revving our engines at the exit of the parking lot. A scantily clad young lady walked between us with a handkerchief. I rolled down my window and tied a red bandanna around my head.

 MWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAaaaaaa!!!!

 You're not going to be laughing for very long!

I reached over and flipped on my blinky light on top of the truck.

 Eat shit and die, yuppie scum!

The chick dropped the handkerchief and, once again, the race was on. Due to the weight differences between the two vehicles, the Civic got the early jump on me. Broad St. is just as the name implies, Long and wide (how I like my women? Ew).

I dropped the proverbial hammer. I could almost sense the fuel jetting into the engine at a fast rate. The cold air intake was ramming fresh air to the beast under the hood. I hit 90 and she kept climbing. I was pulling up on his rear quarter panel. We caught the green at the corner of Broad and Main, and took the sharp left to the square. I then found out that my truck cornered like the HMS Dreadnought and lost some ground. We sped around the square and approached Broad again. Not wanting to be too dangerous, we stopped at a red light.

Wellll, Broad St has three lanes to each side. Scooter was taking up the right most lane, I was in the middle, and a Police officer pulled up next to me in the left. Because of the direction he approached and the size of my truck, the poor boy next to me didn't see the Officer. I revved my engine and looked over at Scooter.

 PUSSY!

It was the perfect set up.

He furrowed his brow and stomped on the gas.

Before the light changed.

He tore ass down the road and the Officer was not far behind him. The light turned green and I rolled slowly by the now pulled over Civic. The officer shot me a wave and went back to writing the kid a ticket. I pulled back into the lot much to the dismay of his friends. The general look of the crowd could only be summed up as Shock and Awe.

I started my sweeperly duties with everyone just staring at me. About 5 minutes later, the cop showed up, lights ablaze, and got over the PA system from the car.



CHILDREN! GO HOME! YOUR LEADER WAS BEATEN BY A STREET SWEEPER! YOU ARE NOW SHAMED! LEAVE OR BE ARRESTED! I *WILL* IMPOUND YOUR SHIT!

I was in tears along the curb line. Cars started speeding out and dispersing when the officer pulled up.



Hey, nice set up back there.



Thanks, I'm here to help keep the streets clean.



Nice! Just do me a favor. Next time you go down Broad Street at 3:30 in the morning, let's make sure it's not at 97 miles an hour.



No problem, sir!

Not what you were expecting pt 5:

Well, the weeks went by, We talked and emailed every single day. Her mom was getting better, and she might be able to come back up in a few months. How are you? I'm fine, how are you? Love you! Love you too! How's work-

And one day, the calls stopped.

And so did the emails.

And so did the letters.

A week went by with unanswered calls and letters.

And then my phone rang.

"Hello?" My voice was raspy on the other end from too much booze and too little sleep.

"Yeah, is Bruiser there?"

"Speaking.

"Hi, this is Jake, I'm Jen's father."

"Oh, hello sir! I'm sorry we haven't had a chance to talk be-"

"Bruiser. Listen to me."

"...Yes..."

"Listen, son. I'm so sorry we had to... I'm sorry the first time we spoke had to be like this."

"..."

"Son, Jenny was coming home last week. And... uh-" I could hear his voice start to break up.

Tears started welling in my eyes, but my voice was cold steel.

"Yes, sir."

"What I'm trying to say, is that Jen was hit by a drunk driver on her way home from work. I'm so sorry."

My entire world imploded in on itself, but GODDAMNIT, I was NOT going to cry over the phone to this man.

"Why didn't anyone call me?"

"It's been hectic, son. We didn't know until we looked through her phone. I'm... I'm so damn sorry. She loved you. She loved you. You were good to her, and for that, I owe you my life."

"Thank you sir."

"Listen, Here's my number. Please call me as soon as you're available to come down. I would like to meet you."

"I will."

"I'm sorry, Bruiser"

"Goodbye, sir."

One of the things she hammered me about was going back to school.



They won't take me back!



You don't know that!



Whatever... silly girl.

After I hung up with her father, I was in a haze. For some reason, I checked the mail. One letter was in the box.

"DEAR BRUISER:

Congratulations on your re-enrollment for the....."

I just burst into tears and laughter.

She sent the application off without telling me.

Death of a Sweeperman:

I called my closest friends and we circled the wagons for the weekend. I got a knock on my door at 9 am on Saturday. It was my good friend Gill with a handle of Crown Royal.

"How are you?"

My voice was devoid of all emotion.

"She's gone."


"I know, man. I'm here."


"Thanks"


And no words were said for the next 2 hours. Just drinking, chain smoking, and listening to Rock music 2 clicks past way too fucking loud. Eventually, more friends showed up. We drank, and yelled, and drank, and cried, and drank, and laughed, and drank. We plowed through liquor like it was going out of style.


And at the conclusion of the weekend, I dried up, washed up, and that was it. That's how I grieved.

Since I was slated to go back to school, I walked into the office with a resignation letter in hand. I tapped on the Boss' door.


 Come in, Bruiser.

 Hi, boss.


 I heard about your girlfriend, I'm so sorry.


 Thank you. *Slides letter across the desk*

 Going back to school?

 Yes I am. This is my two weeks.

 Good. You don't belong here.

 Uhhh, thanks?

 What I mean, is that everyone comes into this job either going down or coming up. It takes longer for some people to come back up than others. You're one of the best, and you'll be

missed.

😊 Thanks.

I walked out and Jim was waiting outside.

😊 You're leaving?

😊 Yeah.

😊 So, that means you have two full weeks left?

😊 That's about the short of it.

😊 This is going to be fun.

😊 What do you mean?

😊 You can do whatever you want out there without anyone doing shit. What are they going to do? Fire you?

😊 ... You bring up a good point.

😊 I know.

I grabbed my gear and got ready for the night. I started up the truck and Jim's words echoed in my head.

😊 You can do whatever you want without anyone doing shit.


... Whatever you want.


The following two weeks were the high of my insanity. If you thought that the previous stories were out of control... well...


Just wait and see.

Bombs Away:


I called up my buddy Scott, the one who was in the Army.

 Bruiser, you nut, what's going on man?


 Remember when you told me that you had some things... left over... from your last tour?

 Mayyyyyybeeee... What are you looking for?

 How about I just meet you at your place.

 No problem, I'll be here for a few more hours.

It was a few hours before my shift and I rolled over to Scott's house. I gabbed with his wife for a little bit and Scott and I eventually ended up in his garage.


 So, what are you looking for?

 Smokers.


 Wow.


 I wanted to see what you had.

He pulled a box out from under a work bench.


 Low Tox screening grenades. Used either in training simulations and for covering advancing friendlies. Low Tox means the shit isn't going to hurt you like CS will.


He pulled one out of the box.


 Easy to use. Hold the spoon, pull the pin, and roll it away. It'll cook off as soon as you throw it, so there's no delay.

 Very good.


He picked up a bag and threw 4 of them in

 How much do I owe you?

 Not a thing. I don't even know what you're going to do with them. Knowing you, I don't want to know. Just forget about where you got them, okay?

 You're a sweetheart, you know that?


 Awwwww, thanks Bruiser. If I were gay, I still wouldn't sleep with you.


 Don't ask, don't tell.


 Exactly.

We shot the shit a for a while. I had one more stop to make, so we parted ways.

I drove over to JD's house and knocked on the door.


 Ey, man!


 What's up. Hey, I was wondering if I could borrow a few things tonight.

 Sure, what do you need?


 You know that strobe light you rigged up to plug into a cigarette lighter?

 Sure do! It's out in the garage. What else do you need?

 That portable amplifier thing you bought at a yard sale last year. Do you still have it?

 Damn man, what are you getting into?

 You don't want to know

 Yeah, I've got it. Remember? We rigged it up to play your iPod.

 Oh, I remember it.


We searched for the stuff, found it, and loaded it up. I bid farewell and ran over to the office.


I was thinking about the 31 flavors of revenge I was about to exact.


A grin spread across my face as I pulled into the office.

Bombs Away Pt.2: A plan comes together


Bryce rolled to a stop beside me.

 So, how many people have told you that they don't want to know what you're doing?


 Oh, just about every single person. Do you want to know?


 Is it going to harm any property, person, or yourself?


 No.

 Then I don't want to know. I owe you for Lucy, so here you go.

He pulled out a small box from the back.


 Just like you asked for. Two road flares. They were written off of the inventory, so they don't exist.

 Thanks.


 Just do me a favor and be safe?

 Always.

I checked my watch. 2 hours until show time. I said goodbye and rolled over to Gill's apartment.

 Everything is in my room. Let me go get it.


He ran into his room and came back out with a garment bag. He zipped it open so I could take a look.

 Oh, this is good.

Gill was into theater and making movies. A replica Roman Centurion costume was in the bag. He flipped over the helmet and showed me the inside.

 The fake blood is in this bag with a small tube that hangs out here.

He picked up another long tube and connected it to the side.

 Pretty straight forward. This small plunger is spring loaded. Squeeze the button here and

the blood comes out here. Keep pumping it for more blood. i took the liberty of attaching a nozzle on the end to give you a nice spray.

😁 Thank you so much, man. You're a big help. I owe you big time.

🔪 We'll just call it even for the...ah... incident down in Daytona.

😁 Deal.

I stashed the bag in the truck and looked at my watch.

😁 Not too long, now. Not too long.

In the recent weeks, I had been having a problem with a group of Goth kids hanging out at one of my properties. One night they egged my truck. Another night, they destroyed the parking lot and it took me 2 hours to do a half hour job. I had been taking it easy on account to the fact the Jen was trying to tone me down a little bit.

Now that she was gone. Well... I let loose with all guns blazing.

Payback is a bitch.

A cold, heartless, uncaring bitch.

Jim met me over there.

😁 Okay. The parking lots lights are on a timer. They go off in 15 minutes. I'll park my truck blocking the entrance.

😁 You don't have to do this, you know?

😁 I know that. I'm just tired of not getting a chance to see the show.

😁 Well, you'll have a front row seat.

Jim kept a look out while I changed into the Centurion costume. I slung the PA system over my shoulder and plugged it into the iPod. I then plugged the strobe in and set it on the dash. I flipped the switch on and off, testing it out. I laid out my arsenal of smokers and road flares in the passenger seat.

😁 Excellent.

I could hear shitty Goth music from around the front of the parking lot. A shout here and there,

a random "FUCK OFF!" thrown in. Oh yeah, this was going to be good.

About that time, the parking lot lights went out. Jim pulled around and blocked the Entrance and exit, effectively sealing off the lot.

5 minutes later, it was show time.

It was completely pitch black as I slowly eased my truck around the corner. I could see about 25 or 30 goth kids with their cars circled up. I saw all sorts of dancing in the circle with Marilyn Manson blaring out of a boom box. I caught a portion of a conversation.

 OH MAN, I'M SO FUCKING HIGH RIGHT NOW!

 I KNOW MAN! I THINK WE'RE ALL STILL TRIPPING PRETTY HARD!!

I couldn't believe my luck.

It doesn't get much easier than this.

I threw the truck into gear and sped off to the circle of cars. I turned the lights off and did laps around the circle of cars. I started pulling the pins on the smokers and throwing them out of the window. The goth kids were too baked to do anything but stare. I pulled away from the circle, completely hidden by the smoke. I flipped on the strobe.

I hopped out and hit PLAY on the iPod.

Master of puppets started blaring out of the PA system.

I popped the two flares and started running toward them.

It looked like the fucking Apocalypse. Metallica blaring, strobe light, smoke, and road flares all going off at once. I ran toward them at full steam and shouted.

 I AM THE DARK LORD HERE TO REAP YOUR SOULS!

 AHHHHH! HOLY FUCKING SHIT, WHAT'S GOING ON!

 YOU HAVE FUCKED WITH THE WRONG PERSON! PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR THE BATTLE!

I ran through the smoke and chucked the road flares at them while pulling the sword from the sheath. They were running into each other and falling down on the pavement, too scared to get up. I stood over a group of them.



WWWWAAARRRRRRHHHGGGGGGGGAAAAAAHHHH!

I jammed the plunger down and sprayed them with blood.



Ohshitohshitohshit! AHHHHHHH! WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING!

I made like I was ripping at my face, standing over a goth girl, spraying her with fake blood and pointing the sword at her.



PLEASE! PLEASE, OH FUCKING CHRIST, PLEASE!



YOU! YOU HAVE SINNED! I'M GOING TO RIP YOUR STEAMING FUCKING GUTS OUT! I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY! I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU FUCKING PAYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY.



NOOOOO! OH GOD!



ARE YOU READY TO DIE?! ARE YOU FUCKING READY TO ATONE FOR YOUR SINS?!



OH FUCK, I WANT TO LIVE! PLEASE!

I had never seen terror like this before. They actually thought they were going to die at my sword.

Most of them had regained their footing and had started to hop into cars.

I tore the helmet off, with my face covered in blood, I dropped to my knees and screamed.



AAAAARRRRRRGGGHHHHHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Screaming. Squealing of tires. I stood up, cut the music and watched them ram each others cars as they got to the blocked entrance. Little did I know, Jim was getting in on the act. He had a Richard Nixon mask on with glowsticks taped to the sides.



I AM NOT A CROOK! I AM NOT A FUCKING CROOK!

Eventually, cars started hopping the curb and peeling out down the road. I could hear screaming 4 blocks away and fading fast.

Jim drove over with a roll of paper towels and helped me clean the fake blood off and stow the costume and gear. We cleaned up like nothing had ever happened.

I heard from a reliable source that I showed up at the hight of a 36 hour LSD trip.

Some of the goth kids didn't leave their room for 2 days.

All of this was the first night of my last 2 weeks.

Mission accomplished.

I can make that:

I was pretty worn out the next night. I'm not used to spraying down Goth Kids with fake blood set to the tune of Metallica. I was honestly looking forward to having an easy night. I had picked up Gill and we were generally fucking around the entire night. Everything was going just peachy.


Until he made a bet with me.


You see, like most guys, I can't back down from a wager. It's a personal insult to everything I hold sacred. Look me dead in the eye and say, "I bet you can't do...." and chances are, I won't back down.


We were behind a place that had an open loading dock. It was basically a concrete ramp set up in the back for trucks to load and unload. That's it. A concrete ramp.

No safety rails.

No turning back.


 How much of a badass are you?


 If you took Steve McQueen and bred him with Macho Man Randy Savage, tossed in some Evil Knievel with a sprinkling of Danzig... Well, let's just say I'm more badass than that. Oh, and they're all spawned from a motorcycle riding demon from hell. Yeah. More badass than that. Times 6.


 I don't think you're that badass.


 Really?


 See, a true badass wouldn't back down from a bet.


 You haven't made one yet.


 I bet that you can't jump your truck off of that concrete ramp.


 That concrete ramp, over there?

 Take the cocks out of your ears. Yes. That ramp. Right. Fucking. There.

 Get the fuck out of my truck. I can make that.

 You're kicking me out, now? Going to make me walk home? You big pussy.

 Shut your whore mouth, Gill. I'm kicking you out so that when I DO jump that ramp, you don't shit your pants in my truck.

 I don't think you'll do it.

 Watch me.


So I dropped him off, drove down the strip a little bit, and started making practice runs. Gill shouted at me.

 C'MON, GODDAMNIT! DO IT ALREADY! YOU BIG PUSSY! JUMP!


And to this very day, I have no idea what possessed me to do what I did next.

I rode back down the strip, lined up, and dropped the fucking hammer. I hit the ramp and sailed off the end.

Weeeelllllllllll, it turns out that these trucks weren't made for stunts. I slammed down on the front end pretty damn hard. Hard enough, in fact, to deploy the airbag. It was a dumb fucking move on my part, but like I said, I don't back down from anything.

 Ho-lee-shit. HO-LEE-SHIT! I didn't expect you to fucking do it! ARE YOU FUCKING CRAZY?!

Blood was pouring down my nose.

 My nose is broken.

And I looked at Gill dead in the face, put my two index fingers on either side, and squeezed.

CRACK!

My mind was saying: AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH WHAT THE MOTHERFUCK?! OH FUCK ME RUNNING ON A FRIDAY!!

But I just looked at Gill and said.

 Ahhhhhhh, all better. Just had to reset it.

I took stock of the truck. For some reason, I didn't snap the axles or pop the tires. Everything

was kosher except the airbag.



What the fuck is the matter with you?!



Told you I was badass. C'mon, we've got to beat fucking tracks and finish the night.

That was the fastest I ever swept. That night I coined the phrase "Ram-Air Injection Method" of street sweeping.

I dropped off Gill and pulled back in before anyone else. I got out my pen and started writing up a Maintenance slip.

DRIVER: Bruiser

TRUCK: The one with the deployed airbag.

REPAIR REQUESTED: Well, I was hoping to get the oil changed. Perhaps a new air freshener. If you have time, maybe you could see about the deployed airbag.

NOTES: If you could only witness one thing in your entire life before the Lord God Almighty struck you blind, it should have been this.

NOTES CONTD: It deployed on it's own. Scout's honor.

Therapy:

Two down, 12 to go. I pushed the door open to the office.

🤪 What... the...

🤪 Evening, Doug!

🤪 What are you doing?

🤪 What? Oh! I'm just clocking in, man.

🤪 No... man, what are you DOING?

He was referring to the way I was dressed. Pressed slacks, golf polo shirt, and a Titleist ball cap.

I also brought my bag of clubs.

🤪 Well, Doug, I'm going to work harder than I ever have, tonight. I mean, I'm REALLY going to put in some time.

🤪 you're going to play golf, aren't you?

🤪 NO! NO I AM NOT GOING TO PLAY GOLF WHILE I SHOULD BE WORKING!

That caught the attention of everyone in the office.

🤪 DO YOU HEAR THAT, AMERICA!? I'M NOT PLAYING GOLF! *started mock crying*
NOOOOOOOooooooooo!

And I ran out of the door.

Looking back, it's no wonder these people thought I lost my mind.

I noticed that I kept running my route faster and faster each night. This particular night, I had left myself with about 4 hours to kill. I finished up with my last property, pulled around back, and got out. The back of the property faced a very large wooded area, with the Interstate far off in the distance. I slung the clubs over my shoulder and ascended a ladder to the roof.

I set the clubs down, reached into the bag, and produced a box of balls. I selected my driver, lined up, and beat that ball like it owed me money.

THWACK!

😂Damn... sliced it to the right.

I teed up again.

THWACK!

I started thinking about where this journey had taken me.

THWACK!

A car pulled up and Mike hopped out. He climbed up the ladder and joined me on the roof with a thermos of coffee.

😂🍷Greg Norman, you are not.

THWACK!

😂I don't play golf.

😂🍷I was about to say.

THWACK!

😂I got these a few years ago. I was going to learn how to play, but just never had the time.

😂🍷You don't look that bad. You're hitting the shit out of that ball though.

THWACK!

😂I have a lot of pent up aggression.

😂🍷About what?

THWACK!

😂Oh, I don't know. I burned out of college when I was 20 years old. 20 years old, dad. I couldn't handle the pressure. I ended up working here. If I couldn't handle it the first time around, what makes me think I'll be able to handle it now.

THWACK!

😂🍷First of all, you burned out of college because you were working 3 jobs and taking 18 hours. You were staying up for 36 hours and sleeping 5. Put anyone under that kind of pressure for as long as you were, they would crack. And hey, look at me? I flamed out of the IT industry. I

probably won't recover from that. I probably won't ever touch another network again. And you know what? That's okay with me. You'll be just fine, trust me.

THWACK!

🤔 You think?

🤔 Are you kidding me? You've done more at 20 and 21 than I ever thought about doing at your age. You know where you want to go. Just hang on for the ride, that's all you can do.

THWACK!

🤔 You want to take a swing?

🤔 Oh yeah.

And it continued on like that until sunrise. We must have hit my entire stash of golf balls. Just standing, talking, and golfing.

That night did a lot for me. It gave me a lot of clarity in my life.

It also gave me a chance to plan the rest of my time with the company.

I needed to go out with a bang.

I fought the law, and the law won.

I finished the first week or my last 14 days without too much fanfare. Going ape shit with smoked grenades and jumping ramps had left me tired and bruised. I was about to take the first sip of an ice cold Crown and Coke when my phone went off.

😬Bruiser.

📞Bruiser, it's Bosslady. Listen we had a weekend guy get arrested. We need you to come in.

😬Bosslady, I've had a hard week and I'm just about to relax.

📞Time and a half.

😬I'm on my way.

So I show up, grab my gear and head out to dude's truck. I open the door and I'm immediately assaulted with the stench of a thousand broken dreams.

😬What the Christ?!

This was seriously the most disgusting truck I'd ever seen.

So, while on time and a half, I decided to take two hours and clean the truck.

I eventually make the thing bearable, grab the route map, and plan on doing nothing because hey... It ain't my route, and it's the weekend. If you're too dumb to get arrested on a gun charge before your shift? Not my problem.

Well, I'm traveling a shit load out of my way to a wonderful town called "Coopertown". Which, by the way, is the biggest speedtrap in my fair state. US-431.

Well, I'm doing about 55 miles an hour with my foot getting a cramp because the accelerator isn't mashed to the floor. I'm jamming out to some John Lee Hooker when I see the blue lights blowing up behind me.

😬Glorious.


So I pull over, and the cop pulls behind me.


And. Sits. Right. There.

Until another car pulls up behind him, and then another one pulls in front of me. Eventually a very rotund officer of the law gets out of the squad car and comes up to the drivers side


window. This guy was Roscoe P. Coltrane incarnate.


 Evenin' *sucks his teeth*


 Evening, officer.

 Yew know how fast yew were goin'?

 I couldn't have been doing more than about 55, sir.

 Hick hick hick, well, there's a problem with that, boy.


 What's that?

 The limit's 50.


It turns out, they had changed the speed limit but didn't change the street signs. I knew this because of two things:

- 1) The officer told me that the speed limit changed last week.
- 2) The sign I pulled in front of said "LIMIT 55".

At this point, another officer came up to the passenger side window and was taking a peek into the truck.

 Well, sir, the sign I'm in front of says 55. I'm a relief driver tonight, so I'm not familiar with the area.

 You been drinkin'?

 No sir.

 You been smokin' weed, boy?


 Absolutely not.


 Go ahead and step out of the car for me.

WHAT THE FUCK?!


 Fine.

I hopped out and he asked me to step over behind the truck.

 Yew mind if we take a look inside?

 Actually, yeah.


 Excuse me?


 I was wondering if you had probable cause

 Put your hands behind your head, I'll give you your fuckin' probable cause.


SNAP! Go the handcuffs.


 This is quite the pickle.

 You're going to sit right down now and have a little talk.

 Really? Do I hafta? I just bought these pants!


 SIT!


 Alright, but you're going to be hearing from my dry cleaner


 Lookie here, boys! We got a co-median!


 Don't forget to tip your waitress, boys!

He pushed me down onto to the ground. I looked up and smiled at him.


 What's so funny, boy?

 Oh, I'm just mentally keeping tabs on how many complaints to file against you. That's two right there.

 You're not from around here, are ya, boy?


 Well, if you're talking about the wet assed ground on the side of US 431, no. I live about 30 miles south of Nashville.


 You don't talk like you're from 30 miles south of Nashville.


 You got me! You got me. I'm from D.C.

 Dee-Cee?

 The... District... of... Columbia... Our nation's capital?

 So you think you're reeeeeaaaaal smart. City boy.

 What's the deal? You going to charge me with something?


 I don't know yet.

He turns and yells to the other cops.


 TOSS IT!


And they proceed to rip the inside of the truck apart.

They tossed it for 10 minutes and finally one of the cops whistles.

 Well, lookie what we found here!


 Oh.... Shit....


 Do you know what this is?

 That would be the biggest fucking handgun I've ever seen.

It was a SW .460 Magnum complete with two speed loaders.

 I know it sounds Cliché, but it's not mine

 Oh really?

 Hand of god.

I started to play mental connect the dots...

Gee, the guy I'm relief for just went down on a gun charge.

This is not my truck, it is his truck.

Therefore this is his gun.

🗨️ I swear to god, it's not mine. I'm not even old enough to have a carry permit. Besides, if I'm going to carry a piece, it's going to be a semi-auto. Something user friendly and quick on the draw with enough power to drop someone. I'm thinking a Glock .40 possibly a Sig if I could afford it.

🗨️ You know an awful lot about guns

🗨️ I grew up in D.C. I've been around.

🗨️ We're probably going to take you to the station for processing. You want to make a call?

🗨️ Please.

🗨️ If I let you out of the cuffs, you gonna do somethin' stupid?

🗨️ I promise.

So he let me out of the cuffs and I made a phone call to the only person I knew that could help me sort this out.

🗨️ Bryce, it's bruiser. Look man, I'm fucked 9 ways to Sunday here.

🗨️ It's 2 in the morning. It's my night off. I'm in the middle of playing GTA San Andreas. Do you know how long I've been waiting to finish this game?

🗨️ I know, man. But I'm seriously fucked here.

🗨️ Who did you kill?

🗨️ I'm pulled over on 431 outside of Coopertown....

And I explained the story to him.


🗨️ Give the phone to the cop in charge.


So, I gave him the phone and stood off to the side. I could only hear one side of the conversation.


🗨️ Officer Jackson.... yeah.... uh-huh.... We found-... uh-huh... What?.... He-.... right.... But we found-.... No, this is MY jurisdiction..... No.... No.... You're kidding me..... Yes I like my job.... Yes, I'm sure.... Okay.... Okay.... Sorry about this.... Thanks for your time.... No, Thank you.... Bye.... What?.... Yeah, I'll tell him.


He snapped the phone shut and yelled at his "Boys".

 PUT THAT FUCKIN' TRUCK BACK TOGETHER! NOW!


 What did he say?


 Boy... you must have some pretty important friends. I better not see you speedin' through here again.

 What about the gun?

 Since it's not yours, I might as well hold it until someone reports it missing.

 gotcha.

 By the way, your friend wanted me to give you a message.

 "Tell him to remember this night every time he wants to dress up like a Roman soldier and put on a fireworks show." I have no idea what that means. And I don't want to know.

Funeral of a Sweeperman

Here it was, the culmination of everything I had done within the past year. The herd had thinned out some. Jim left a few days after "Bombs Away". Mike had left quite awhile before my resignation, off to go drive a truck and battle his own ghosts. Lucy had found greener hunting grounds and split town as far as I knew. Doug switched to weekends and I didn't see very much of him at all.

It was my last night at the company, and with that came the full spectrum of emotions.

Happiness that I was going back to school


Pride that I had made it through this job


Hope for my future


Sadness that I was going to be closing a chapter in my life.

I sat in the break room and stirred my coffee. I stared at my face in the black reflecting pool, getting sucked into the hard eyes that started back.


I showed up at 7:45, early just as I had been my first day. Mark came in, plopped down next to me in the chair.


 Nickel for your thoughts?

 I thought it was a penny.

 Inflation's a bitch, what can I say?


 I don't want to leave.

 Why in God's good name is that?

 Because I'm comfortable here. I can be myself without worrying about what I should say or do. I don't know if I'm ready to go back out into the daylight.

 You're ready.

 And what makes you the expert?

 Nobody thought you would make it. A boy in the land of men. 20 is pretty fucking young to be doing anything. Look at us, man? We're all old. We've all seen way too much. Plus, it's a

shitty job. But you? You dove right in there, torpedoes be damned. You listened, you learned, you made us laugh. You did good, boy. Real good. And you know what?

😏What?

👊😏We're all proud of you. You fell down harder than anyone I've seen. Life dealt you one shitty hand, but you got up. You grabbed onto your bootstraps and you pulled yourself back up. That's something to be proud of. Walk tall and go out there and live your life. Live it as hard as you possibly can. You've learned lessons, boy. You're a man now. I'm so glad that I got to see it. So glad. And your dad's proud of you too. Sure as the sun comes up in the east and sets in the west, that man is proud of you. I know he says it, but take it from me. He means it.

😏Thank you.

👊😏Now, it is my last duty as your trainer to inform you that your ass better be on time in your truck for your last night. You've got about ten minutes of moping around here before you need to get to work.

😏No rest for the weary.

👊😏I'll meet you outside.

He stopped at the doorway and looked at me.

👊😏There's two things I've always wondered.

😏What's that?

👊😏What sort of voodoo magic did you use to have all this fun and still have time to so a great job.

I smiled

😏I can't tell, it's a trade secret. What else did you want to know?

He rubbed his beard

👊😏How did you manage to cover two trucks in nacho cheese?

😏A magician never reveals his secrets.

👊😏*looking at his watch* Oooo, looks like you've only got 9 minutes of moping time left.

I turned back to my lukewarm coffee. I looked deep into those hard eyes.

Those were not my eyes.

No.

Those were the eyes of a man.

I thought about the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my short life...

We met halfway at a Wafflehouse off of I-75 in Georgia. It was mutual meeting place. The father of boyfriend's lost girlfriend, and the boyfriend of a lost daughter. We'd agreed that Florida was too far for me and Tennessee was too far for him. At least that was the excuse that we both used. I pulled into the parking lot at 11:30 P.M. with a mixture of nerves and sadness. Why the hell was I worried about meeting the dad? I've never EVER been nervous meeting the parents. I lit a cigarette and tried to calm down. I decided that I did not want to see the grave site. I'd had my weekend of mourning, I'd already grieved, I'd already said goodbye. Seeing her grave would do nothing but unravel the pain that I had so painstakingly balled up and put away.

I stepped out, locked the Hummer, and walked to the door. I saw him waiting for me, smoking his own brand of cancer. He was tall, muscular, and with black hair starting to go gray at the temples. His face was drawn and betrayed no emotion.

"She said it was a nice car."

I stuck out my hand.

"Bruiser."

"Good to finally meet you. I'm Roger."

We shook, stabbed out our cigarettes, and walked in. A quiet booth in the corner. No food, just coffee.

"Thank you for meeting me halfway, Bruiser."

"Like wise, sir. I don't think I could have made it."

"I understand."

"So, what happened?"

He dug a cigarette out of a pack, lit one, and tossed the pack over to me. I lit up as well.

"She was driving home from work and got to an intersection. She got the green and was hit by a drunk driver who didn't stop for the red. Died on impact, so we know she didn't suffer. Probably didn't see it coming."

"And the son of a bitch that hit her?"

"He survived."

We locked eyes. We shared a moment. Two pairs of cold dead eyes staring at each other, and nothing needed to be said. I knew what was on his mind and he knew what was on my mind. The drunk drive would pay. He would pay a price far harsher than anything courts dealt out. This, we were sure of.

I blew out a cloud of smoke, and gave a short knowing nod.

"Good."

"I'm glad we think alike, Bruiser."

"Let me know if there is anything I can do in that department. Maybe I've got some resources."

"You'll be the first one I call."

A waitress came by with a refill for both of us. He cleared his throat and smiled.

"She really loved you."

"I know."

"I guess I just wanted to say thank you for treating her right. I'm glad that she got a chance to be with a good man."

"Thank you, sir."

And we sat there and talked for the better part of 2 hours. About her. About me. About the family.

It was finally time for us to go. Standing out in the parking lot with hands shoved in pockets he said,

"You're welcome to my home anytime you're in Florida"

"Thank you, sir."

He reached into his jacket pocket. He pulled out a folded envelope and handed it to me. I instantly recognized the flowing script on the front.

"She was going to mail this to you the day after... Well, anyway, I know you're like me. That means you think you've already dealt with it and that you've packed the pain away. I want you to have this."

"... Thanks...."

He shook my hand.

"Be safe out there, Bruiser. Don't hesitate to call me."

"Likewise." this message was clear "Call me if you need anything... anything."

"Like I said, you'll be the first."

I grasp the letter in my hand and made my way back home. I walked into my apartment, poured myself a Crown and Coke, and finally got up the courage to read the letter.

"Dear Bruiser,

God, I miss you so much! It feels like forever since I've gotten lost in your blue eyes. I hope this ends soon so I can see you! I miss being in your arms and feeling safe.

Mom is doing a lot better. Dad is still working way too much, Jeff and Dan are still acting out in that awkward pre-teen stage. They think they're hot shit BMX bikers now. Jeff managed to crack his chin wide open trying to pull some bullshit stunt. They'll eventually grow out of it I guess. Oh! I told Matt about your Hummer the other day. He made a smartass comment about helping pull you out of the mud with his jeep. I'm glad I know the score in that fight.

I'm about to head to work in a little bit. It'll be a few days by the time you get this, but know that I'm going to call you just as soon as I get home!

I love you. I love you more than you can ever know. When I'm in your arms, I feel safe from everything and I know that nothing in this world can hurt me. It should only be a matter of weeks before we're together again.

All my love forever and ever,
Pika (Jenny)

P.S. - I wanted to wait until I got back to tell you, but I just can't wait any longer... I left you a gift in the cigar box in your closet."

I took a swig of my drink, neatly folded the note, and set it aside. Calmly, slowly, I walked into the bedroom and flipped on the closet light. I reached up and grabbed the battered cigar box that I used to hold memories in. I took it back to the dining room, sat down, and opened the lid.

Inside was a small velvet bag with a note with her writing on the side pinned to it.

"...What are you doing the rest of your life..."

I opened the bag and a tear quietly traced a path down the side of my cheek.

It was a compass in a gold case. On the back was an engraving.

"The north and south and east and west of your life"

They were lyrics from "our" song; the Dusty Springfield version of "What are You Doing the Rest of your Life"

I flipped it open and there was a picture of us.. a candid shot one of her friends took of me sneaking in a kiss on her cheek during the photo. Completely unexpected.. completely in love.

I put the compass back into the bag, put the bag and letter into the box, and put it back on my shelf.

I walked out onto the porch in the cool night air, lit a cigarette, and silently cried for the last time.

I shook myself out of my haze in the break room. Memories. You can look back at them... just don't stare.

I got up and headed to the yard to work my final night...

I pushed my way out of the office door with my head buried in the route clipboard. I checked my watch to make sure I was on time and I caught something out of the corner of my eye.

My fucking truck is gone.

Not only is my fucking truck gone, but there's something oddly peculiar sitting in it's space. I went for a closer look and burst out laughing.

It was an inflatable doll with a road flare jammed in it's mouth and a gold spray painted broom and dustpan. A note and a card was taped to the broom handle.

"Bruiser,

You were doing such a good job out there, we figured you needed more of a challenge to enhance your job satisfaction. Per HR instructions, we have replaced your truck with this golden broom*. HR has also noticed your tendencies to associate with call girls of the transvestite persuasion. The company prides itself on keeping its employees trained in all fields. Please use this doll to develop a proper training module that we hope to implement next quarter. Included is a road flare for whatever you use them for... I, like everyone else, do not want to know.

Sincerely,
Boss lady

P.S.- You were one our best employees Bruiser! I'm sorry to see you go, but I know that you're headed places. We got someone to cover your shift for you tonight as a token of our appreciation. Take the night off and enjoy it!

* Please note that these are accountable items and will be docked from your pay 🙄"

I folded up the note and looked at the card. It was signed by everyone with the unit. Down at the bottom was a small note from Mark.

"We finally decided to call you, 'Bruiser'"

And that's how I got this nickname.

I took one long last look at the building. Yes, it was over.

Crackheads
Tranny hookers
Flaming trucks
Roman soldiers
...Lost love....

Everything.

But, I learned. God, did I learn. I learned that a man the job does not make. It's the man that makes the job. I picked up fucking garbage. People threw garbage down and I picked it up. I picked it up because I take pride in my work.

I also learned how to be a stronger man. I learned to stand up for myself and not take an ounce of shit from anyone.

And most of all, I spent time with my best friend... my dad.

Yes, this was the end. Before I left, I wrote Mark a note.

"M,

The reason I finished up and still had time to have fun was because I'm at least 15 years younger than anyone here. Deal with it.

The nacho cheese, however, came from cans behind a hotdog place. How it got on the trucks? Well, all I'm going to say is that you should have never let Mike and I play together. We cause trouble.

Thank you, my friend. For everything
-B

PS- I really like the name 'Bruiser'. I think it fits."

And that, friends, is the entire story. From beginning to end, you've heard it all. Like I said, it's all true. The only thing I've changed are names of people and businesses.

Some of this story has never been told. To be honest, telling you about Jen was never my plan. I just never thought that she would become part of the story in such a big way. On that note, I still think about her sometimes, but in the end, I've finally let her go. I managed to move on. The compass and letter are still in the cigar box. I am the only person that has ever seen them, and I intend on keeping it that way. It's just my way of dealing with things.

I'm also sorry about the blue balls with the posting. I never expected the thread to blow up like it did. I originally thought that people would grow tired of it by about the 5th page, and because THIS was my first thread. By the time I realized you guys wanted to read it, I was cranking them out as fast as I could. Next time I have a story to tell, I will be sure to post it all at once.

As far as movies and books? Well, that may be something for later on down the line. I could certainly see a book down the road. I want to thank you guys that helped me out with the thread links and especially AstroZamboni for his efforts making the .doc files.

Thanks for all the well-wishes for my injuries. I actually had the first day of PT and I'm able to stand on my own without screaming like an 11 year old girl at a pillow fight.

I'll be back out raising hell soon enough, I promise.

And remember, A promise from Bruiser is a goddamn certainty.

-FIN-